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## The discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore

Vitorio, Raymund Victor Morales

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**THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP  
IN SINGAPORE**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED  
FOR THE JOINT DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE**

**AND**

**CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE, DISCOURSE & COMMUNICATION  
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON**

**2019**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'R' and 'V' followed by a horizontal line.

---

Raymund Victor Morales Vitorio

24 January 2019

## **Acknowledgments**

This thesis would not have been possible without the help of many people. I would like to thank my research participants who, despite their busy schedules and commitments, took the time to participate in my study and shared their stories with me without any reservations. I hope that this thesis does justice to their narratives. I am also deeply indebted to my friends in Singapore who helped me with the recruitment of my participants.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Joseph Sung Yul-Park and Ben Rampton. The chance to be trained by them is a privilege I will always be grateful for. Joseph has always looked after my scholarly growth since my study abroad semester in NUS in 2008. Ben consistently stressed the value of patience, rigor, and academic humility. Their patience with me was incredible. They supported me in my other academic ventures and showed their concern for me not only as their PhD student but also as a future scholar.

I also thank my examiners, Lionel Wee, Melanie Cooke, and Tommaso Milani. The comments and suggestions I received from them were very insightful, constructive, and inspiring. I also thank my professors at NUS and KCL who gave me valuable comments during the writing process. Mie Hiramoto provided me with guidance and support throughout the PhD. My discussions with Rebecca Starr and Constant Leung also helped me explore analytical directions. I am also very thankful for the insightful feedback that I received from Adam Jaworski, Ruanni Tupas, Miguel Pérez Milans, Mi-cha Flubacher, Gilles Merminod, and Rodrigo Borba at various conferences, meetings, and seminars that I attended during the PhD.

My thanks also go to friends who helped me throughout the writing process. Aileen Salonga exposed me to the field of language and globalization and always listened to my ideas and thoughts. Anne-Mette Hermans recommended Sketch Engine to me, which became integral to my discussion in Chapter 5. Rebecca Tan guided me through the literature on diversity management. Jocelyn Navera helped me proofread parts of this thesis.

My colleagues at NUS and KCL provided me with a lot of support during the PhD—from the theoretical debates that we had in the office to the social events elsewhere. From NUS, I thank Wong Wei Li, Nicola Mah, Jennifer Ong, Teck Heng Tan, Ryan How, Tianxiao Wang, Ritu Jain, and Christian Go. From KCL, I thank Kelvin Lui, Louise Eley, Cedric Deschrijver, Qumrul Chowdhury, Ignacio Lopez Escarcena, Ferney Cruz Arcilla, Munirah Al-ajlan, Mikka Højholt, Reema Albilehi, and Nic Guinto.

I would also like to thank my closest friends who were with me every step of the way despite my geographical movements. My sincerest thanks to Rowland Anthony Imperial, Jack Harris, Shona Loong, Elisha Anne Teo, Alex Finnegan, Bianca Yap, Manuel del Rosario, Carlos Clement, Andy Huckle, Juliette Kuno, Łukasz Kopeć, Luke Mckeand, and Jérôme Olympie. I am also very grateful for the support of Johannes Højgaard Nielsen.

Finally, I thank my family for always believing in me, and for always helping me go after my dreams. My parents, Renato Viales Vitorio and Ma. Marcinette Morales Vitorio, have spent their whole lives sacrificing for my siblings and me so we can be the best we can be. Because they are both teachers by training, they never failed to instill the value of education in me. I hope that one day, I will be able to prove to them that it was all worth it.

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## Summary

Current studies on language and citizenship view citizenship not just as a fixed political category but as a product of continuous negotiation that can be mediated by various sociolinguistic means. This study contributes to the ongoing academic conversations on language and citizenship by examining how the notion of citizenship is discursively constructed in Singapore, and its relationship with how new citizens imagine and position themselves in Singapore society with respect to the material conditions that surround them.

By using an interpretive approach that incorporates methods from linguistic ethnography, corpus linguistics, and discourse analysis, this study analyzes a dataset comprising public media texts (newspaper articles and government-produced documents about citizenship from 2013-2017) and interview narratives and observational data from 18 new citizens. The focus on new citizens, which has been lacking in sociolinguistic research, was motivated by the importance of their position in Singapore society: while they have completed the citizenship application process, they continue to grapple with citizenship-based issues in their everyday lives.

This study analyzes how various signs, such as linguistic patterns, metapragmatic comments, and multimodal resources, come to index citizenship. The study proposes that these signs cluster together and become typified into the field of indexicality (Jaffe, 2016) of citizenship. The study argues that citizenship functions as a metasign—a sign “...that regiments how it itself and other signs are to be interpreted” (Gal, 2016: 114). Viewing citizenship as a metasign paves the way for the analysis of how various signs

are regimented and construct the notion of citizenship and for the investigation of how people position themselves in relation to citizenship. The findings reveal that Singapore public media texts primarily revolve around the legal and political aspects of citizenship that tend to reflect governmental discourses on citizenship, while the interview narratives highlight the socially situated, experiential, and affective aspects. My participants' articulations of citizenship—which were intertwined with their accounts of emotions and lived experiences—facilitate how my informants employ or reconfigure indexicalities about citizenship. The participants used the signs of family and mobility to present themselves as new citizens who negotiate the global and the local—a dichotomy that undergirds policies and discourses on Singapore citizenship. Moreover, their narratives about how they manage difference enable them to present themselves as new citizens who are good citizens in their own way. This shows that my participants' reconfigurations of statal narratives into something that matches how they view themselves allow them to claim status as legitimate and good citizens of Singapore. The findings show that the new citizens' perspective can help us understand how dominant discourses on citizenship are circulated and reproduced in Singapore society.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1. Background and Motivation**

This thesis investigates the discursive construction of the notion of citizenship in Singapore. It explores the different sociolinguistic resources that play a part in how the notion of citizenship influences how people live their lives, and how people's lives reflect and contribute to the said discursive construction. The primary assumption of this thesis is that "citizenship" is not a neutral word or a fixed political category where people are supposed to fall into; rather, it is a source and a product of continuous processes of negotiation and performance that are sociolinguistically mediated.

The context of Singapore—a highly developed, multicultural, and multilingual country in Southeast Asia— provides a good vantage point for this analysis. Immigration is an integral part of Singapore's history: immigration significantly affected its pre-World War II population growth and its industrialization in the 1980s (Yeoh & Lin, 2013). Its current demographic makeup of Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others (CMIO) is a key manifestation of the role of immigration in Singapore. Immigration has become a convenient way of increasing Singapore's human capital, which is integral to its economic growth especially because of its severe lack of natural resources. This does not come without any challenges. The exponential growth of immigrants in Singapore has been a major consideration in government policies. Citizenship has become a salient, often sensitive, topic in the different discourses in



Singapore—from public media, to speeches and platforms of government officials, to everyday talk among people.

My motivation for doing this research stems from my personal experiences as a student pass holder in Singapore and my personal theoretical inclinations as a sociolinguist. Singapore is a major part of my own immigration history. It was the first foreign country I ever visited—in 2008, for an undergraduate study abroad term. It was also the first foreign country I have lived in—since 2011 when I started my graduate studies. As a Filipino national who holds a student pass in Singapore, I have been exposed to and am constantly curious about the differences between Singapore and the Philippines, especially in terms of their ethnic and linguistic makeup. I had to familiarize myself with the different languages and English varieties in Singapore, especially when I started having my own personal networks in Singapore. I have been exposed to various public media discourses in Singapore. In innumerable instances, I had to participate in conversations about citizenship. I have Singaporean friends who joke about renouncing their Singaporean citizenship, as well as foreign friends who casually talk about applying for Singapore citizenship, including those who actually did. There were also many instances when I was asked by people if I wanted to become Singaporean since I had been living there for a few years. I remember being surprised at these conversations at first because conversations of this nature do not normally take place in the Philippines, which has a significantly lower non-citizen population than Singapore. Moreover, I was particularly intrigued by many ludic remarks about the linguistic repertoires of people in Singapore, especially in terms of English varieties. Many of my close friends in

Singapore occasionally targeted me, in very light-hearted and playful ways, about being “very Singaporean” in many ways but “so foreigner” because of my accent, attitudes, and behaviors. Some of them even called me a “very educated maid,” which alludes to my status as a graduate student and the prevalent stereotype in Singapore that Filipinos are foreign domestic workers. These banal interactions and experiences piqued my interest: I wanted to find out what Singapore citizenship means in Singapore. I started to become fascinated by the intricate entanglement of language, race<sup>1</sup>, class, and citizenship in the Singapore context. The more I became exposed to the discourses in Singapore, the more I started to become introspective of my own personal experiences in the country.

In January 2013, two years after I moved to Singapore as a student pass holder, the Singapore government released a controversial and highly divisive Population White Paper entitled “A Sustainable Population for a Dynamic Singapore” (National Population and Talent Division, 2013). Many of my friends in Singapore had strong opinions about it, even those who previously were not very vocal about their political opinions. Some of them even joined protests against the White Paper, which is rather uncommon; after all, Singapore has a government that highly regulates political protests. Because of this, I started following the news and other public media about the topic. I wanted to know more about the situation not just because I was a researcher who was interested in the academic implications of this policy; I

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<sup>1</sup> Singapore still uses race as a political category up to this day. The most common example of its race-based policies is the National Identity Card (IC) which explicitly includes the race of individuals. This will be discussed more in Chapter 2.

wanted to understand it better because I felt personally affected by the issue given my immigration status.

While this White Paper includes various strategies of increasing the population of Singapore such as giving incentives to Singaporeans to have children and encouraging overseas-based Singaporeans to come back and permanently settle in Singapore, its key goal of increasing the current population of 5 million to 6.9 million by 2030, through immigration, has become the most reverberating aspect that has been picked up by both traditional and social media in Singapore. The White Paper was criticized as a pro-foreigner policy that harms locals in the long run during the protests and in many public media texts. The opposition to it took many forms, from diplomatic discussions of possible alternative policies to downright xenophobia from members of the civil society, especially in public forums such as user comments in newspaper websites and posts on social networking sites. A series of protests against the White Paper were held in the Speakers' Corner, Singapore's "first and only outdoor venue where its citizens are permitted to give public speeches without the Public Entertainment Licence" (Sim, n.d.). One of the protests was attended by an estimated number of 4,000 people (Adam, 2013)—an unprecedented number for a country that does not have a convivial relationship with public dissent. The organizer of the protest, Gilbert Goh, claimed that the "... protest event is meant for Singaporeans to come here in a peaceful manner to show their displeasure at the 6.9 million population target" ("4,000 turn up at Speakers' Corner for population White Paper protest," 2013). Responding to the strong opposition, the government eventually made amendments to the White Paper by saying that the 6.9 million

population was not a target but just a projection necessary for long-term planning of infrastructure and land development. They also added an amendment that states that the White Paper “supports maintaining a strong Singaporean core by encouraging more Singaporeans to get married and have children, supplemented by a calibrated pace of immigration to prevent the citizen population from shrinking...” (Vasu, 2014). While the attempt to divert the issue from population to sustainable planning was clear, many people in Singapore continued to oppose the White Paper. The topic has become so salient that it became a primary campaign issue during the 2015 General Elections.

This White Paper makes several statements about “citizenship.” For instance, it states:

Extract 1. “Citizenship” in the Population White Paper

We do not expect our TFR [total fertility rate] to improve to the replacement rate of 2.1 in the short term. Taking in younger immigrants will help us top up the smaller cohorts of younger Singaporeans, and balance the ageing of our citizen population. To stop our citizen population from shrinking, we will take in between 15,000 and 25,000 new citizens each year. We will review this immigration rate from time to time, **depending on the quality of applicants**, our birth rates, and our changing needs.

**Permanent residence is an intermediate status through which foreigners take up citizenship. It is meant for those who have a long-term stake in Singapore and intend to sink roots here.** We have tightened up significantly on the number of PRs granted each year. We have come down from a high of 79,000 new PRs in 2008 to about 30,000 each year currently. We plan to maintain the current pace. This will keep a stable PR population of between 0.5 and 0.6 million, and ensure a pool of suitable potential citizens.

We will continue to encourage and help new citizens integrate into our society. **We would like them to adapt to our way of life, while enriching the diverse experiences, skills and capabilities in our society** (National Population and Talent Division, 2013, pp. 3-4, emphasis mine).

This extract provides a glimpse of how the White Paper talks about citizenship. Citizenship categories such as “Singaporean,” “foreigner,”

“permanent resident,” “potential citizens,” and “new citizens” are explicitly laid out and treated as fixed legal categories. Potential citizens are treated as entities that can be assessed based on “quality” and their intention to “sink new roots here,” which not only implies the eligibility requirements of citizenship applications but also bonds citizenship with integration. Potential citizens are expected to “adapt to our way of life, while enriching the diverse experiences, skills and capabilities in our society”—a seemingly general statement yet echoes larger theoretical debates in the social sciences about assimilation vs. multiculturalism (e.g. Young, 1990; Taylor, 1994; Glazer, 1997; Parekh, 2000; Alexander, 2001; Gilroy, 2004; Extra, Spotti, & Van Avermaet, 2009; Kivisto, 2012; Modood, 2013). Finally, inasmuch as it provides a very detailed sketch about the proposed population plan, it does not provide any explicit details about what new citizens ought to do specifically, save for undefined words such as “integrate into our society” and “adapt to our way of life.”

These issues served as a catalyst for me to merge my personal experiences in Singapore with my theoretical inclinations as a sociolinguist, which mostly revolves around the relationship of language, mobility, and globalization. I was inspired by many sociolinguistic studies on citizenship, such as the role of language in the perceived processes of naturalization and integration of migrants and new citizens (e.g. Blommaert, 2001; Piller, 2001; Milani, 2008; Extra, Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009), the discursive construction of migrants (e.g. Sharma, 2006; Clary-Lemon, 2010; Li, 2011; Yeoh & Lin, 2013; Lim, 2014; Tan, 2014), and language policy sensitive to

citizenship issues (e.g. Chambers, 2003; May, Modood, & Squires, 2004; Wee & Bokhorst-Heng, 2005).

One underlying similarity between these studies is that they tend to focus on how language (e.g. varieties, testing, multilingualism) influences what people (e.g. immigrants, host community, government) can do in order to achieve goals concerning citizenship (e.g. becoming a citizen) and integration (e.g. assimilating into the community, supplementing the community), or on how citizenship affects the linguistic situation in certain contexts. While this is undeniably an important venture, it does not focus on how the notion of citizenship is constructed by various stakeholders to begin with. Citizenship is a notion that can be constructed using various discursive means, and the different processes of signification that take place in that discursive construction are worth investigating. I believe that there is a need to pay attention to this to have a more comprehensive understanding of the implications of how citizenship is viewed in Singapore society. The Singapore context provides a window for doing so: while government policy tends to be fixated on the political and legal aspects of citizenship, people tend to come up with discussions about citizenship beyond their legal aspects. Because of this, it can be said that definitions of citizenship vary depending on who views them. These definitions may include the subjectivities of who comes up with them, which may pose tensions or inconsistencies to people who encounter the impact of citizenship on their everyday lives, such as new citizens<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The term “new citizens” is commonly used in public discourses in Singapore—such as official government documents and speeches, newspaper articles, casual chats of people—to refer to people who have recently taken up Singapore citizenship. My participants also used this term to refer to

Many studies in the sociolinguistics of citizenship tend to focus on how regimented practices such as language and cultural testing, mostly set in the West, influence the ideologies and practices of people (e.g. Extra, Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009; Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero, & Stevenson, 2009; McNamara & Ryan, 2011; Milani, 2008; Piller, 2001; Shohamy, 2001; Shohamy, 2009). Many immigration policies all over the world tend to assume that testing provides a reasonably reliable means of assessing how people, especially those who seek new or dual citizenships in a different country, would survive and contribute to their destination country. Singapore provides a different view on this issue. Inasmuch as the White Paper explicitly talks about the “quality” of “potential citizens,” Singapore does not require citizenship applicants to take language<sup>3</sup> or cultural<sup>4</sup> tests (to be discussed in Chapter 2). It also does not have a dual-citizenship option for its citizenship applicants. These policies are important because they help shape the discourses around and expectations from immigrants in Singapore. This, of course, does not mean that citizenship applicants have it easy. On an everyday basis, they need to hurdle through banal language and cultural “tests,” such as

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themselves or other people who have recently received their Singapore citizenship. Hence, I adopt this term in this thesis.

<sup>3</sup> The Singapore Constitution requires citizenship applicants to have “an elementary knowledge of one of the following languages, namely, Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil,” with possibilities of exemption for applicants above the “...age of 45 or who is deaf or dumb” (Singapore Constitution, Part X, Art. 123 (1)(e)). There are no formal language tests during the application.

<sup>4</sup> Citizenship applicants, upon receiving their in-principle approval letter, need to complete the Singapore Citizenship Journey (to be discussed in Chapter 2.3.2). The online module has an assessment component, but applicants can redo the test until they meet the passing mark. Both the community sharing sessions and the experiential tour do not have methods of assessment.

“passing for” (cf. Piller, 2002; to be discussed in Chapter 7) citizens, by virtue of living in Singapore.

Finally, I became interested in this study because I wanted to find out what citizenship actually entails in Singapore. As seen in the White Paper, the government rationalizes its dependence on immigration for its economic growth by arguing that immigrants will naturally integrate into Singapore. It seems that citizenship statuses such as foreign resident, permanent resident, and new citizens carry variegated rights and obligations. For instance, new citizens are expected to integrate the most because they intend to “sink roots” in Singapore. Given that immigration, and the consequent giving away of citizenship, has a tendency to cause social repercussions due to potential demographic shifts, new citizens are subjected to ideologies that influence how they make sense of and enact their position in Singapore society. How people orient to regimes of citizenship need to be revisited because they involve subjective and symbolic practices. Turner’s (1993) definition of citizenship alludes to this point. He defines citizenship as “that set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups.” He also claims that it is:

... important to emphasize the idea of *practices* in order to avoid a state and juridical definition of citizenship as merely a collection of rights and obligations. The word ‘practices’ should help us to understand the dynamic social construction of citizenship which changes historically as a consequence of



political struggles (p. 2; italics and quotation marks in original).

This means that it is essential to examine how people take up social positions based on how they perceive the notion of citizenship in relation to their feelings, lived experiences, and personal struggles. This allows us to appreciate the formation of citizenship not just as a political category, but as a sign that people orient to in their everyday lives.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

In this light, this thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How is the notion of citizenship discursively constructed in Singapore?
2. How do new citizens negotiate their positions as new citizens of Singapore?
3. How does the new citizen perspective contribute to our understanding of how dominant discourses on citizenship are circulated and reproduced in Singapore?

I answer these questions by exploring how citizenship is talked about in public media texts and the interview narratives of the new citizens who participated in this study. I also examine how new citizens respond to the different subjectivities that go along with the notion of citizenship. This involves analyzing how they intertwine their articulations of citizenship with their narratives about their emotions and lived experiences, and how they reflect, affirm, or challenge dominant discourses in Singapore. This sheds light

on their uptake, which shows how they orient themselves to the notion of citizenship.

### **1.3. Overview of the Thesis**

This thesis has eight chapters. This chapter has introduced the general background of the thesis, my personal motivation for choosing this topic, and an overview of common issues about citizenship in Singapore. Chapter 2 provides a sketch of the citizenship policies in Singapore, and how they relate to the growing multidisciplinary literature on Singapore citizenship and migration studies. Chapter 3 presents a review of diversity management frameworks and sociolinguistic research on language and citizenship and outlines concepts from metapragmatics that can serve as a framework for the understanding of citizenship. Chapter 4 discusses the methodology used in this thesis.

Chapters 5 to 8 present my empirical findings based on various datasets and analytical approaches. Chapter 5 provides a sensitizing overview of the discursive representations of citizenship and citizenship categories in public media texts using a corpus-based approach. This chapter also examines how these representations come to be clustered together as part of the field of indexicality of the metasign of citizenship. Chapters 6 and 7 pay attention to the narratives of new citizens. Chapter 6 examines how new citizens present themselves as new citizens who negotiate the global and the local—concepts underscored by Singapore’s global city-state aspirations and citizenship policies—through their interwoven accounts of citizenship, family, and mobility. Chapter 7 investigates how new citizens portray themselves as new

citizens who negotiate difference. By reconfiguring statal narratives such as multiculturalism and multilingualism, they are able to present themselves as good citizens of Singapore in their own way. Chapter 8 provides the conclusion of the thesis where the main findings of the study are summarized. I will also talk about their significance, as well as the limitations of the thesis and recommendations for future studies.

## Chapter 2

### Approaching Citizenship in Singapore

#### 2.1. Introduction

As briefly introduced in the previous chapter, this study aims to explore how a sociolinguistic lens can contribute to the understanding of the discursive construction of the notion of citizenship by looking at the case of Singapore. To do so, it is obligatory to first understand key aspects of the role of immigration in Singapore history and policy. In this chapter, I first provide an overview of Singapore—starting with a description of its current socioeconomic makeup and the major historical events related to immigration that led to this (Section 2.2). Given that there are many existing studies<sup>5</sup> that explain this in great detail, the overview I provide in this chapter is somewhat simplified. It is not my goal to come up with a comprehensive discussion of the history of immigration and citizenship in Singapore; rather, my goal is to start a conversation about Singapore and highlight the citizenship issues that Singapore faces, which are part of the inspiration behind this study. I then outline the citizenship frameworks in Singapore to show how these frameworks negotiate the interests of the individual and those of the state (Section 2.3). I also discuss the major strands of pre-existing research about the tensions and issues in the notion of citizenship in Singapore (Section 2.4).

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<sup>5</sup> Hill and Lian's (1995) book, *The Politics of Nation Building in Singapore*, provides a good sketch of historical events that led to Singapore's nation building policies. For more recent studies that address the current challenges in Singapore immigration brought about by globalization, see Yap, Koh, and Soon's (2014) compilation, *Migration and Integration in Singapore*, Vasu, Yeap, and Chan's (2014) *Immigration in Singapore*, and Mathews and Chiang's (2016) *Managing Diversity in Singapore*.

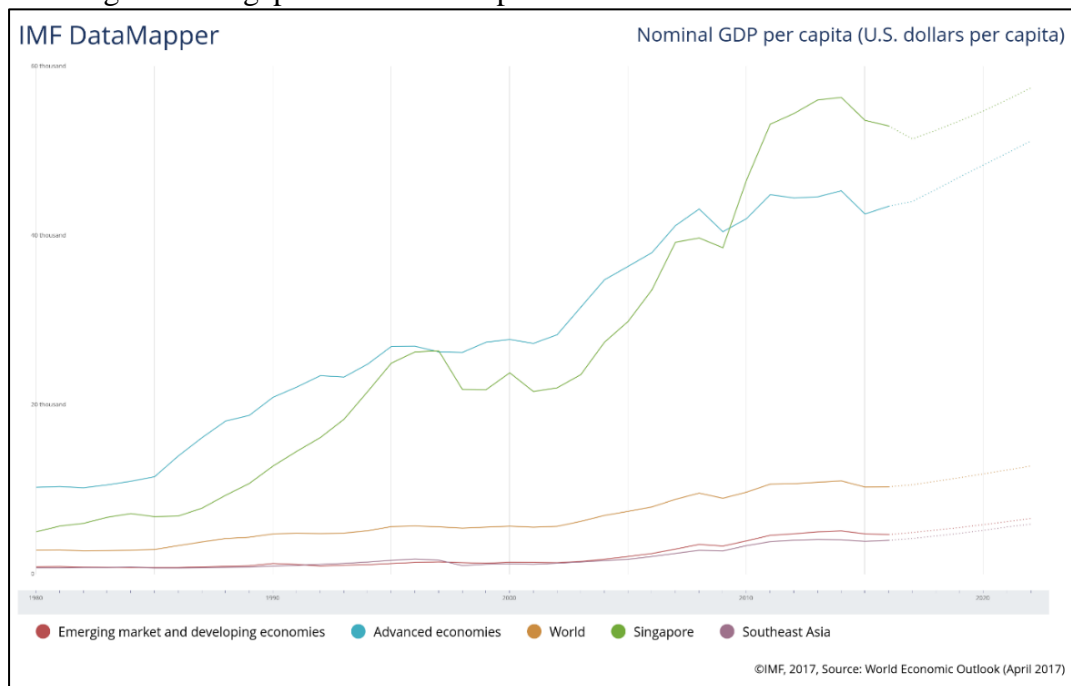
I conclude this chapter by providing a summary of the key points (Section 2.5).

## 2.2. The Story of Immigration in Singapore

### 2.2.1. Current Socioeconomic Conditions in Singapore

Singapore is a well-developed global city-state in Southeast Asia. In 2015, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that Singapore had the eighth highest Gross Domestic Product Per Capita (GDPPC) in the world, which was set at USD 53,630 (“IMF Annual Report 2015”, 2015). The IMF also reports that Singapore even outranks many of the world’s leading economies. This can be seen in the following figure, which was generated through the public data of the IMF (“IMF DataMapper”, n.d.).

Figure 1. Singapore GDP Per Capita versus other economic clusters



This figure shows that Singapore’s GDPPC is significantly higher than many advanced economies (USD 42,560), the world, (USD 10,290), and

Southeast Asia—the immediate political and economic region of Singapore (USD 3,870). What is more interesting to note about Singapore’s GDPPC is that it is mostly driven by service-oriented and heavily professional industries, which is not surprising given that Singapore does not have natural resources. The Singapore Department of Statistics reports that “Wholesale and Retail Trade,” “Business Services,” and “Finance and Insurance” are the top three industries that contribute to Singapore’s GDP—amounting to 15.6%, 15.5%, and 12.6% of the total GDP, respectively (Statistics Singapore, 2016a). More information on the other industries are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Breakdown of Singapore's GDP

Gross Domestic Product				
	Growth in Real GDP		Share of Nominal GDP	
	2014	2015	2014	2015
	Annual Percentage Change		Percentage Share	
TOTAL	3.3	2.0	100.0	100.0
Goods Producing Industries	2.8	-3.4	25.5	26.4
Manufacturing	2.7	-5.2	18.8	19.8
Construction	3.5	2.5	5.2	5.2
Service Producing Industries	3.6	3.4	70.0	69.2
Wholesale & Retail Trade	2.1	6.1	16.8	15.6
Transportation & Storage	2.6	0.0	7.4	7.4
Accommodation & Food Services	1.7	0.2	2.2	2.1
Information & Communications	7.0	4.2	4.2	4.2
Finance & Insurance	9.1	5.3	12.2	12.6
Business Services	1.6	1.5	15.7	15.5

This stellar GDPPC number shows that Singapore has a very rich economy and that the money that its economy generates is concretely felt by its population, as illustrated by their per capita share. This economic wealth, alongside its political and economic stability, is one of the reasons why Singapore has become the economic hub of Southeast Asia, earning a common

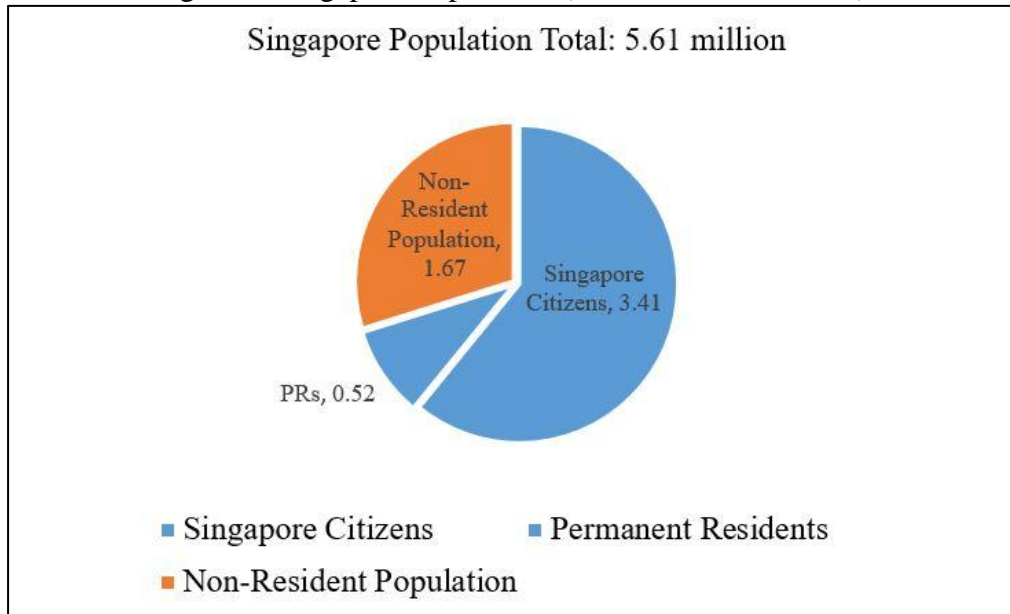
description of being “the Switzerland of Asia” (e.g. Arnold, 2007) in the business and economic circles. This description is effective because it shows that Singapore, despite its current<sup>6</sup> small size of 719.7 km<sup>2</sup> which makes it the 192<sup>nd</sup> biggest country in the world (“The World Factbook – Central Intelligence Agency”, n.d.), was able to succeed economically despite its small size. Moreover, this description also reflects how banking and finance have shaped the economy of Singapore, like Switzerland. Finally, this description shows that like Switzerland, Singapore’s small population has not hindered it from developing its highly professional human capital.

According to the Department of Statistics, Singapore has a small population of 5.61 million (June 2016 estimate)—3.93 million of which (roughly 70%) are residents and 1.67 million of which are non-residents. Residents are defined as Singapore citizens (3.41 million) and permanent residents (0.52 million), whereas non-residents are defined as people who hold other immigration passes, such as employment or student passes (Statistics Singapore, 2016b). This can be visualized in the figure below.

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<sup>6</sup> I use the term “current” because Singapore continues to gain more land area due to land reclamation. Its current size is significantly larger than its size when it became an independent country in 1965, which was 581.5 km<sup>2</sup> (Data.gov.sg, 2015).

Figure 2. Singapore Population (in millions; June 2016)



Singapore uses racial categories to classify its inhabitants, which are Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others (CMIO). In 2016, the Department of Statistics reported that Chinese comprise 74.3% of the population, while Malays and Indians comprise 13.4% and 9.1%, respectively (Statistics Singapore, 2016b). The four major racial groups have not significantly changed over the years. These four racial categories are represented in Singapore's choice of its official languages, which are Mandarin (to represent the Chinese), Bahasa Malay (to represent the Malays), Tamil (to represent the Indians), and English (to serve as the lingua franca which is not assigned to any racial category, not even the Eurasians). Wee (2002) argues that while English is a de facto mother tongue of many Singaporeans, the government denounces any attempt to assign it to a particular racial group, such as the Eurasians. This will be discussed in greater detail later.



### 2.2.2. Brief History of Immigration in Singapore

This demographic composition, alongside its corresponding race-based official language policy, is conditioned by the long history of immigration in Singapore. The CMIO demographic has always been in Singapore. During the pre-colonial times, different local (some were later on assimilated as “Malay”) and Chinese groups lived in Singapore.

However, the need to formalize citizenship and nation-building policies became more compelling in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1963, the merger of Singapore, Malaya, Sarawak, and Sabah took place—forming the Federation of Malaya. Lee Kwan Yew, Singapore’s founding Prime Minister, was a strong advocate of the merger. However, Singapore had major policy disagreements with Kuala Lumpur, which stem from economic, political, and social concerns. The government in Malaya was unhappy with Singapore’s opposition to increasing their financial obligations to the federal government, and Singapore was dissatisfied with the inefficient pace of forming a common market, which it deemed was harming its industries. Moreover, the differences between the ethnic composition of the demographics of Singapore and Malaya proved to be a big challenge. Singapore, being predominantly Chinese, had reservations about the perceived dominance of Malays in the Federation. After a mere two years, the merger collapsed; on August 9, 1965, Singapore separated from Malaysia and became a sovereign nation-state (“Singapore separates from Malaysia and becomes independent,” 2014). These events have concomitant effects on Singapore’s citizenship policies.

Hill and Lian's (1995) book, *The Politics of Nation Building in Singapore*, sociologically tracks how historical events in Singapore (e.g. independence from the British; merger and separation from Malaya; occurrence of racial riots; implementation of key state policies such as education, economic, housing, family policies etc.) and the major stakeholders in Singapore society (e.g. government, civil society, economic elite, immigrants, etc.) played a part in the construction of nation-building policies in Singapore, which includes citizenship policies. The authors argue that the nuances of the socioeconomic realities in Singapore pose a challenge to how Western scholarship generally approaches citizenship. The book emphasizes how the rather peculiar way of how Singapore was birthed as a nation-state proved to be a core premise of how Singapore approached the notion of citizenship. This peculiarity stems from the fact that it was not the same as countries in Europe where citizenship was anchored on a history of social homogeneity per the Herderian<sup>7</sup> tradition of one "people-language-territory" (cf. Blommaert, 2006, p. 252) and as other postcolonial countries which came to terms with the imposition of colonial borders and eventual recognition as a nation-state. Rather, Singapore is a country that gained independence from the British colonizers, merged with Malaya to form the Federation of Malaya, was expelled from the Federation due to its major disagreements with racial,

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<sup>7</sup> Piller (2016; quotation marks in original) wrote an online article in *Language on the Move*, a sociolinguistics research website. She disputes the idea that Herder made this claim. She argues that previous studies that had attributed this "slogan" to Herder were incorrect. She claims that the misattribution primarily stems from the researchers' interpretation of Herder's original text, which was in German, and their lack of appreciation of Herder's biographical roots and background. I chose to still include "The Herderian Triad" in this section to reflect the sociolinguistic literature.

immigration, and economic policies—with racial tensions involving the Chinese and the Malay due to affirmative action policies at the forefront of such disagreements—and “came into existence despite its leaders’ deep-seated conviction that it did not constitute a viable entity” (Hill & Lian, 1995, p. 12). They add:

...that state-society relations are problematic and that concepts like nationality and citizenship cannot be taken for granted in examining such relations. Attention is drawn to the need to theorize the relationship between the state, sovereignty and nationality in order to understand how citizenship is perceived and practised...the relationship between the modern state and its citizens is at best negotiable and uncertain (pp. 12-13).

Singapore’s citizenship policies have evolved based on various compelling needs, such as constructing a national identity post-independence to perpetuating the rhetoric of economic pragmatism. The authors provide a good sketch of the different ideologies that the government had when they came up with citizenship and nation-building policies. In discussing how historical events paved the way for the formulation of nation-building policies, they identify three key principles which can be construed as the “founding myths of Singapore”: pragmatism, multiracialism, and meritocracy (pp. 246-247). Pragmatism is the reverberating rhetoric of the government which stresses that Singapore should always come up with practical solutions to external (e.g. global communist movements) and internal (e.g. race-based riots) threats to Singapore—resulting in the formation of a “paternalistic state” (p. 35) that curtails certain forms of political participation. Multiracialism, as

observed in the policies of the government, is the continuation of the “colonial practice of ascriptive ethnicity: every Singaporean is also classified as Chinese, Malay, Indian, or Other” (p. 5), while simultaneously emphasizing the “hyphenated identity carried by every Singapore citizen” (p. 246) as an indication that the different races can co-exist harmoniously because they are all bound by the “Singaporean” label. Finally, meritocracy is the value that bestows rewards upon the cream of the crop, which can be seen in many policies, such as the highly competitive education system, corporate-like running of the government, and condemnation of nepotism and corruption. Given the salience of these values in the discourses and policies in Singapore, many studies have been done to investigate how these are materialized, which will be discussed in detail in Section 2.4 below.

The second half of the quote above— “how citizenship is perceived and practised...the relationship between the modern state and its citizens is at best negotiable and uncertain” (pp. 12-13)—implies the need to go beyond the official state discourses of about citizenship and nation-building. After all, Hill and Lian agree with the view that citizenship does not only operate in terms of the categories set by the law but also in relation to ideological methods of inclusion and exclusion that can be enacted by different stakeholders (cf. Extra et al., 2009, pp. 1-33; Ho, 2008, p. 1287; Martin & Feng, 2006, pp. 47-66; May, Modood, & Squires, 2004). The authors propose the concept of “Return to Sender” to explain this, which they define as “a process in which the definition of citizen vis-à-vis the state has to be repeatedly renegotiated” (p. 13), which can be seen in how state policies inevitably get altered by grassroots reception. This shows that while the government seemingly has

much power in coming up with definitions and mechanisms of citizenship, it is not a monopoly: people can contest them as they work around them. In other words, even though Singapore is usually criticized for being a paternalistic state, it does not mean that it is devoid of any space for some level of democratic participation, given that the government recognizes its role in nation-building. Wee (2015) seems to support this view in his discussion of how People's Action Party (PAP), the political party that has exclusively dominated Singapore politics since 1959, has started to be more inclusive and consultative in crafting policies. He argues that the 2011 General Elections—a significant event because the PAP lost an unprecedented six parliamentary seats to the Workers' Party—“...not only forced the government to be more consultative, it also forced the government to more adopt a explicitly [sic] apologetic and reformist stance where the shift towards greater consultativeness became seen as both more urgent and essential to the PAP's political future” (p. 456). This shows that the “Return to Sender” approach still applies to the present, perhaps even more than ever, in understanding how the Singapore government formulates and implements policies, especially its citizenship and nation-building policies.

These two components of the “Return to Sender” framework—the “official” discourses of the Singapore government and the “unofficial” discourses of the members of Singapore society—have been and continue to become the central concerns of the existing body of research on citizenship in Singapore. In the following sections, I provide a survey of this body of research on two levels: on the level of policy, I discuss studies on citizenship frameworks of Singapore (Section 2.3); on the level of everyday practices, I

talk about studies on how citizenship is enacted by different members of Singapore society (Section 2.4).

### **2.3. The Citizenship Application Process in Singapore**

In the social sciences, citizenship is usually viewed as the bestowal of membership and access in a community upon individuals, which concomitantly come with rights and duties. As Ho (2008, p. 1287) claims, following Isin (2002) and Painter and Philo (1995), "...citizenship is both a legal formula conferring formal state membership (in terms of rights and obligations) and a social and cultural construct (in terms of who belongs)." Hill and Lian (1995, p. 1) start their discussion with a recollection of two major traditions on citizenship studies from Western scholarship. The first is the view that citizenship is the concept of "conferring *rights* and thus as expansionary, emancipatory and centered on the autonomous individual," which means that "once [citizenship is] achieved, [it] has to be maintained." The second tradition is the civic republican framework which views citizenship as a concept of "conferring *duties* and is rendered meaningful by the practice of those duties within a community of similarly responsible and participating citizens," which underscores the role of the collective and the role of citizens to actively reconcile their individual goals with those of the community. They argue that the second framework resonates with the Singapore context more because the government historically has stressed the value of the collective over individuals.

Reconciling the interests of the individual and the society is a central concern to citizenship. Various ideologies drive those interests. As mentioned

in Section 2.2.2., the ideologies of pragmatism, multiracialism/multiculturalism, and meritocracy are central to the logics of citizenship in Singapore (Mathews & Chiang, 2016; Hill & Lian, 1995; Koh, Soon, & Yap, 2014). The government stresses that Singapore society is and should continue to be built on these ideologies. This rhetoric is commonly employed to justify immigration policies—in a way, the government asserts that Singaporeans should not feel threatened by immigration because it remains undergirded by these three ideologies. Hence, the management of diversity is facilitated through these ideologies (Mathews & Chiang, 2016).

These ideologies can be clearly seen in the citizenship requirements in Singapore. These requirements are particularly important because they reflect the government's underlying assumptions and ideologies about citizenship. In the next section, I explain what the requirements are and how they reflect the three ideologies, and how this has been approached by the literature.

### 2.3.1. Citizenship Requirements for Citizenship Applicants

This section discusses the requirements that citizenship applicants in Singapore must fulfill. This provides us with information on the citizenship application process set by the government. It is important to have a general idea of how the citizenship application process works in Singapore because it is a topic that recurred in the public media texts and interview narratives that I explain in the following chapters.

The Constitution of the Republic of Singapore states that there are four ways of acquiring Singapore citizenship: by birth, by descent, by registration, and by naturalization (Singapore Constitution, Part X).

Application by naturalization is no longer practiced in Singapore; it is now merged with registration. In this section, I provide an overview of these four processes of acquiring Singaporean citizenship; regrettably, this overview is simplified because it excludes many legal details of these provisions.

The first process, acquiring citizenship by birth, states that a person who has at least one Singaporean parent (assuming the parents are legally married) and is born in Singapore becomes a Singaporean citizen. If at least one of the person's parents is a Singaporean citizen, but the child is born outside Singapore, the second process i.e. citizenship by descent, applies. There are, however, legal restrictions as to how long that parent should have stayed in Singapore before the child was born, and as to how the parent/s acquired his or her citizenship. These two ways of acquiring citizenship are based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (right of blood)<sup>8</sup>.

The third way is by registration. This is the way for non-Singaporeans to become Singaporean, which makes them “new citizens.” A person who wishes to acquire Singaporean citizenship by registration needs to meet the following criteria to prove that he or she:

Extract 2. Constitutional Requirements for Citizenship Applicants

- (a) is of good character;
- (b) has resided in Singapore throughout the 12 months immediately preceding the date of his application;
- (c) has during the 12 years immediately preceding the date of his application resided in Singapore for periods amounting in the aggregate to not less than 10 years:

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<sup>8</sup> There are two traditional frameworks of citizenship—*jus sanguinis* (“right of blood”) and *jus soli* (“right of the soil”). *Jus sanguinis* is the framework that states that people can make claims to citizenship based on their descent. Singapore follows this perspective. *Jus soli* is the principle that people can make claims to citizenship based on where they are born. The United States, Canada, and most of South America follow this principle. For a discussion of how globalization has complicated these frameworks, see Castles (2000).



Provided that the Government may exempt any applicant from compliance with this paragraph —

(i) where such applicant has during the 6 years immediately preceding the date of his application resided in Singapore for periods amounting in the aggregate to not less than 5 years; or

(ii) where in any special case the Government considers fit to confer citizenship upon such applicant;

(d) intends to reside permanently in Singapore; and

(e) has an elementary knowledge of one of the following languages, namely, Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil:

Provided that the Government may exempt an applicant who has attained the age of 45 years or who is deaf or dumb from compliance with this paragraph.

(Singapore Constitution, Part X, Art. 123 (1) (e))

While the requirements for application by registration appears to be quite minimalist, there are other concerns that need to be addressed by applicants. For instance, intervening circumstances such as being married to a Singaporean, having Singaporean children, buying property in Singapore, and having an economically viable and stable job are believed to be used as additional criteria in proving that the applicant “intends to reside permanently in Singapore,” for instance. Additionally, race, a category that is still being used officially in Singapore, is commonly regarded as another intervening factor in citizenship applications, since it is used in the recruitment of migrants. Yeoh & Lin (2013) tackle this in their discussion of the Chinese migrants in Singapore. They argue:

...the PRC [People’s Republic of China] is today a popular source of labor supply in the city-state, not just because of the availability of a large workforce to tap on, but also because of the (presumed) fit of its people within a CMIO [Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others] model that is currently under threat of ‘imbalance’ due to varying fertility rates among local groups (p. 35).

These intervening circumstances are not clearly and transparently recorded on paper, as the actual criteria used in assessing applications are not revealed to the public. The Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (2018), the government body that processes these applications, states that all applications via registration are assessed based on an applicant's "own merits." This explicitly reflects the ideologies of pragmatism, multiracialism, and meritocracy. These requirements show that Singapore continues to reinforce its pragmatic mindset by relying on immigration as a necessary resource for the development of its economy. They also show how the government intends to screen the applicants based on their perceived economic and social contributions to Singapore. Finally, the racial aspect, as well as the language requirement<sup>9</sup>, shows Singapore's commitment to being multiracial.

Successful citizenship applicants by registration need to renounce their original citizenship upon the in-principle approval of their citizenship because Singapore does not have a dual citizenship option for persons of legal age<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, they need to officially take the Oath of Allegiance and Loyalty to pledge their commitment to Singapore.

The citizenship requirements provide a glimpse of how the Singapore government defines citizenship. It must be highlighted that the underpinning

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that Singapore does not have a language testing requirement, unlike many liberal democracies in the West. How the ICA assesses whether an applicant passes the "elementary knowledge" of one of the four languages stated in the Constitution is not explicitly specified. The government also does not also require its applicants to attend language learning classes.

<sup>10</sup> Children with at least one Singaporean parent who are born in a country where citizenship *jus soli* is applied may be registered to become Singaporean by descent, in addition to their citizenship by birth in the other country. At the age of 22, they have to renounce their other citizenship if they wish to remain Singaporean.

assumptions of citizenship policies in Singapore of today are rather different from its post-independence state. In the past, citizenship policies were anchored on the construction of the Singaporean nation, which entailed the creation of the Singaporean people. The primary challenge that citizenship policies had to address then was to ensure that people would identify as Singaporean and become committed to the Singapore nation-state and that they would get along harmoniously despite their social differences. While these are still important concerns, the current material conditions in Singapore add more layers of concern for citizenship policies. Singapore's status as an economic hub, not just of the Southeast Asian region but also of the world, requires citizenship policies to address other concerns. As Koh, Soon, and Yap (2014, pp. 1-24) illustrate, the growing unhappiness and discomfort that local Singaporeans feel about the influx of immigrants and new citizens in Singapore "...brought other public policy issues to the fore, making the integration of native and naturalised Singaporeans the subject of political debate and scholarly analysis" (p. 1) because it is aligned with issues of multiracialism and intra- and inter-ethnic tensions, as well as the imagination of the Singapore national identity (p. 6). Hence, in 2009, the Singapore government established bodies and founded programs to improve its integration policies in accordance with the influx of migration, such as the National Integration Council (NIC), the Community Integration Fund worth S\$10 million, and the Integration and Naturalisation Champions program (Yap, 2014, p. 35). These platforms aim to involve all members of the Singaporean society in the process of integration of new citizens and other migrants. In 2011, the government, through the NIC, introduced the Singapore Citizenship

Journey (SCJ), a mandatory program that new citizens need to complete as a final requirement for their citizenship application, as an addition to the constitutional provisions and eligibility requirements mentioned above.

### 2.3.2. Integration Requirements for New Citizens

As the Population White Paper of 2013, discussed in Chapter 1, states, the Singapore government aims to encourage and assist new citizens in the process of integration into Singaporean society (National Population and Talent Division, 2013). They also provide a glimpse of the framework of integration that the government envisions for Singapore. As stated on their website:

Singapore's approach to integration does not demand that new immigrants abandon their own beliefs and culture. Rather, we expect them to share commonalities, values and experiences with fellow Singaporeans so that we can all work together to achieve our aspirations and build the best home for ourselves and our children. (National Integration Council, n.d. a, emphasis mine)

The aim of the SCJ is to “enrich new citizens’ understanding of the key milestones of Singapore’s history and development and deepen their appreciation of Singaporean norms and values, as well as provide opportunities for meaningful interaction with their local community” (National Integration Council, n.d. b). This program is composed of three parts, which are briefly discussed in the website of the NIC.

### Extract 3. Description of the SCJ

#### **1. Singapore Citizenship e-Journey**

This is an online journey that allows new citizens to learn about Singapore at their own pace and convenience. It includes information on our history and development as a country, key national policies, Total Defence, as well as our efforts in *building a cohesive and harmonious society*.

#### **2. Singapore Experiential Tour**

This half-day tour brings new citizens to key historical landmarks and national institutions where they learn about *our history and how we overcome national challenges* in the different domains of urban planning, transport, water resources, as well as security and defence.

#### **3. Community Sharing Session**

This is an event where new citizens are engaged by their community. During the session, *new citizens reflect on their journey towards citizenship, share their hopes and aspirations for Singapore, meet other new citizens, and learn how they can actively participate in the community*. Grassroots leaders and Integration & Naturalisation Champions (INCs) from the People's Association will also share their experiences living in a *multi-racial and multi-religious society*, and *provide valuable information to help new citizens better settle into their community*. (Singapore Citizenship Journey, n.d. a; boldface in original, italics mine)

The SCJ concludes with the Citizenship Ceremony, a formal event where new citizens finally get their Singaporean Identity Cards. Lim (2014) argues that while the SCJ is not a citizenship test (e.g. the online course can be taken multiple times until the new citizen passes it), it serves as an “additional hoop that potential citizens must jump through” (p. 204), which counters the dominant social discontent about the easiness of acquiring Singaporean citizenship. While eligibility requirements aim to ensure the meritocracy in assessing citizenship applications, the SCJ seems to ensure that granting citizenship to foreigners would not disrupt the ideology of multiculturalism. Singapore's integration framework has been a topic of interest to scholars, which we will discuss in the following sections.

The idea of looking towards the future as part of Singapore's integration model is discussed by Rahman and Tong (2013). They argue that the Singapore framework of integration challenges traditional models of

integration by acknowledging and dealing with the impact of transnationalism on citizenship and integration. This means that Singapore's citizenship framework does not just aim to address domestic concerns, which Hill and Lian (1995) mostly focused on. Rather, Singapore's integration framework also aims to include emigrant Singaporeans and immigrant foreigners in the imagination of integration, which they call "transnational inclusion" (p. 82; cf. Ho, 2008). They argue:

In the Singapore case, it seems that the propensity for relocation remains attractive for several reasons...Now, residents overseas do not feel 'away' from home; they are today more well connected than ever before. We do not identify the phenomenon of emigration as well as immigration in relation to the permanent and temporary models of (im-or e)migration because they do not fit into them. The right term for this phenomenon seems to be transnationalism and the concept of 'transnational inclusion' as it envisions the integration of transnational emigrants or transnational immigrants as a process of forming a harmonious and stronger Singapore. It does not necessarily suggest memberships to other countries as a cutting point of relationships; thus it recognizes multiple memberships although multiple citizenships have yet to be recognized (p. 85; quotation marks in original).

They enumerate various examples of transnational inclusion in the different "spheres of integration" in Singapore, such as in the level of policy,

economy, housing, education, culture, and religion. They argue that Singapore's framework of integration simultaneously addresses domestic and transnational concerns: after all, Singapore "...is simultaneously an immigrant and emigrant country...[which permits]...its huge immigrant and emigration population to remain transnational" (p. 93). However, they argue that while Singapore seems to acknowledge the idea of transnationalism, it still does not recognize multiple citizenships. Hence, this acknowledgement is fettered by ideologies from the past, such as the government's fear that dual citizens tend to have dual loyalties, which Singapore cannot afford to have.

While Rahman and Tong's (2013) argument was based on Singapore's cosmopolitan individuals in and out of Singapore, Ho (2006) examines how the views about citizenship of Singaporeans who live in Singapore are still "...invariably influenced by the real and imagined impacts of mobility and cosmopolitanism" (p. 385). She argues that while Singaporeans who live in Singapore tend to exhibit "...a form of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' that is open to gradations of belonging and mobility, the mobility of foreigners *into* Singapore can have a detrimental impact on whether citizens feel that Singapore is home" (p. 397). This results in the contestation and negotiation of what citizenship means in a "cosmopolitan" Singapore. She believes that the contestation and negotiation of citizenship is laden with social tensions which may even go against the myth of multiculturalism that Singapore has been founded on (cf. Hill & Lian, 1995; Yeoh, 2004); hence, it can be said that her assessment of the cosmopolitan imagination in envisioning citizenship is less optimistic than Rahman and Tong's (2013). She also discusses two contradictory cosmopolitanisms that take place in Singapore's model:

First, despite the state-sponsored propaganda that Singapore should be cosmopolitan, the form of cosmopolitanism that the Singapore government is willing to offer is uni-directional: Singaporeans should encourage foreigners to look upon the country as home, but Singaporeans abroad should not sink roots elsewhere. Second, at the level of the citizenry discourse, Singaporeans challenge the state's hegemonic construct of what it means to be cosmopolitan and they are reluctant to extend to foreigners the same sort of cosmopolitan welcome that they would like to receive elsewhere (p. 397).

This suggests that the citizenship framework in Singapore are at a crossroads between the continuous need to construct a cogent national identity—or what it means to be Singaporean—and the emerging need to acknowledge that Singapore's status as a global hub entails the burden to acknowledge and deal with the cosmopolitanism that goes with it. As the Singapore model shows, this is not an easy task. As Kluver and Weber (2003) succinctly state, "the very strategies of globalization that provided for Singapore's economic rise have undermined a consciousness of a shared identity and shared opportunities," which results in the government's efforts to discount the detriments brought about by globalization such as immigration and population concerns, and to accentuate attempts to revitalize the notions of patriotism and national identity vis-à-vis citizenship through localization efforts (p. 386). These views have an effect on the production of Singaporean discourses on citizenship—we will be relevant to the empirical



chapters, especially Chapters 6 and 7, where we examine how discourses on citizenship tend to create tensions for new citizens.

Many scholars, some of whom we discuss in the following section, have tried to describe how citizenship frameworks are actually operationalized in Singapore, with the hope of shedding light on how the notions of citizenship and integration evolve along with the material conditions in Singapore. In the next section, I discuss two main themes of research that do so. These are relevant to how citizenship will be approached in this thesis.

#### **2.4. Tensions and Issues in the Notion of Citizenship in Singapore**

In this section, I discuss three major themes of existing work on citizenship in Singapore. First, I review studies that focus on citizenship, rights, and duties. This section investigates how the notion of citizenship accords variegated rights and duties to different groups of people, which affects the definition of what a good citizen is. Second, I discuss studies that examine citizenship in relation to transnationalism—a key concept in understanding citizenship in Singapore which, as discussed above, is influenced by global flows of migration. I then link this discussion to the construction of identities. Third, I talk about studies on citizenship and how it influences the management of diversity and multiculturalism in Singapore. These areas of research are important to this study because they serve as the backdrop for the investigation of the different issues about citizenship in Singapore. As we will later see in the empirical chapters of this thesis, the

tensions that arise from these issues prove to be relevant to how citizenship is talked about in public media texts and the interview narratives of new citizens.

#### 2.4.1. Citizenship, Rights, and Duties

As the discussion above shows, citizenship is commonly understood as about the conferral of rights and duties on individuals by the state. It is a process of gatekeeping that dictates who can or cannot avail themselves of benefits from the state while fulfilling obligations deemed necessary by the state. Citizenship is a marker that differentiates the citizen from the non-citizen. Singapore has a spectrum of citizenship and residency statuses—citizen, permanent resident, professional pass holders, semi-skilled work pass holders, student pass holders, and family members pass holders—which, as discussed above, are differentiated by “merit.” These different citizenship and residency statuses, legally speaking, denote different benefits for (e.g. passport, financial assistance, access to public housing and other public goods) and obligations from (e.g. military conscription, voting, taxation) people. Many studies, which we review below, have been done to investigate the socioeconomic consequences of such differentiation—many of which tend to follow the critical perspective which primarily focuses on the structures of inequality created by such differentiation.

##### *2.4.1.1. Socioeconomic Aspects of the Citizen/Non-citizen Divide*

The citizen/non-citizen divide has become a fundamental research focus of studies about citizenship in Singapore. For instance, people from the different ends of the spectrum of citizenship statuses—namely, citizens and

migrants—have been an interest to many scholars because of the salient differences of what their statuses entail. It has been reported that migrants tend to be put in a disenfranchised position socioeconomically compared to their citizen counterparts, such as in the case of foreign domestic workers and their Singaporean employers (e.g. Huang & Yeoh, 1996; Yeoh, Huang, & Gonzalez III, 1999; Yeoh & Huang, 2000; Lorente, 2017) and other blue-collar job workers (e.g. Rahman & Lian, 2005; Yeoh, 2006; Rubdy & McKay, 2013). Moreover, it has also been reported that even migrants who are en route to citizenship due to factors such as being married to Singaporean citizens continue to suffer from the inequality produced by the citizen/non-citizen divide. For instance, Yeoh et al.'s (2013; see also Yeoh, 2013; Yeoh, Leng, & Dung, 2013) paper problematizes the social positioning of “foreign brides” in Singapore. They discuss how the differentiating model of Singapore disenfranchises the foreign brides because their residency status is pegged on the citizenship of their husbands; hence, their status as “dependents” also entails that they have to depend on their husbands to claim rights in Singapore. They think this is a problematic setup because non-citizens like foreign brides are cornered in a disenfranchised position, even though they are married to Singaporeans. This suggests that unequal power structures in terms of the conferral of rights and obligations to individuals tend to be reaffirmed by the citizen/non-citizen divide which is still prevalent in Singapore policy and everyday life. The studies above show that exploring the social repercussions of citizenship is important because it illustrates the citizenship-based asymmetrical power relations in Singapore. However, these studies tend to start with the assumption that citizenship *per se* is a factor that influences such

power relations, which is why they tend to look at the dynamics between citizens and non-citizens.

This begs the question: what about people who are positioned in less conspicuous citizenship-based asymmetrical power relations, such as new citizens? The case of new citizens would be important to look at because they are people who have successfully traversed citizenship boundaries yet are often construed as being situated in a “neither-here-nor-there” position, which means that they face struggles which are rather different from other types of immigrants on an everyday basis. Moreover, the “newness” of new citizens also needs to be investigated because that has certain implications to the positioning of new citizens. For instance, how do the government and the people in Singapore perceive new citizens? Can they break away from the status of being a “new citizen,” and if they can, what does this entail and when can this happen?

It is also important to note that citizenship is not just about the conferral of rights and obligations to individuals—it is also about exclusion and inclusion. The question of who gets to be included or excluded revolves around the government’s goal of determining what is best for the social dynamics and economic makeup of the country. The Singapore government aims to achieve harmonious relationships among different groups. However, this aim is not necessarily achieved successfully since the recent immigration policies in Singapore tend to make the citizen/non-citizen divide more salient. Asis and Battistella (2012, p. 32) argue that while the demarcation line between citizens and non-citizens tends to be hazy in the “...contemporary context of intense cross-border movements and possibilities for multiple

belonging...,” there are still instances when the line is made salient. Moreover, further subdivisions within the citizen/non-citizen divide surface depending on the extent of exclusionary/inclusionary goals of immigration policies in Singapore. For instance, the citizen category tends to be further subdivided, such as in the dichotomy of the “good citizen” versus the “bad citizen” or of the “local-born citizen” versus the “new citizen.” Instances like this—when the processes of differentiation between citizenship categories become less obvious, compared to the more obvious differentiation that has been focused on by the studies above that examine power and inequality—are the focus of this thesis. In other words, one of the aims of this thesis is to identify and approach less explicit and more abstract processes of differentiation, such as how discourses of citizenship are taken beyond their economic and political consequences and manipulated to fulfill other goals, such as social differentiation and identity formation.

#### *2.4.1.2. Defining the “Good Citizen”*

The definition of a “good citizen” has been a focus of many studies. We will review several of these in this section. One of the most common topics in these studies is the Active Citizenship and National Education policy, launched by PM Lee in 1997 (“Launch of National Education,” n.d.), which was a way of reinforcing the programs of the Singapore government from the 1960s to fortify the sense of identification and belonging of young Singaporeans with the Singaporean nation (Gopinathan, 2007, p. 61). It is not a special subject in school; rather, it is a driving ideology that is integrated into the overall curriculum in primary schools. Research in this field examine the

complexities of how state ideologies on citizenship are incorporated in the Singapore educational system (e.g. Han, 2000; Sim, 2008; Ho, 2012; Sim & Print, 2009; Tan, 2008; Kong, 2013; Kluver & Weber, 2003). These studies show how the Active Citizenship and National Education programs can create tensions in the definition of the “good citizen.”

Attempts to define the “good citizen” can also be seen outside the classroom. There are studies that have explored how citizenship categories are called into being in different everyday discourses in Singapore, such as in public media. For example, Tan (2014) analyzes discourses from Singapore newspapers and how they construct images of migrant workers in Singapore and how such images perpetuate stereotyping, which can hamper the integration of migrant workers in Singapore society. He argues:

...the dominant images and stereotypes...have come to be the unavoidable lenses through which readers view, interpret and generalise their world – largely through the exaggeration of otherness – and through which they justify their actions so that they might be normatively acceptable to themselves and to others... stereotypes are more likely to encourage the integration of migrant workers into Singapore society while other stereotypes are more likely to discourage interaction. (p. 160)

He suggests that these stereotypes are not just based on the non-citizen status of migrant workers; he implies that their status as migrant workers intersects with other social variables, such as class (in the case of Bangladeshi construction workers) and gender (in the case of foreign domestic workers).

While most of the themes he identified were rather negative (e.g. criminal behavior, undocumented migration, overreliance on foreign workers), he also identifies positive themes (e.g. sympathy for victims of abuse)—which he describes as proof that “Singapore as a whole shows ambivalent feelings towards migrant workers and FDW’s, ranging from the (sometimes grudging) acknowledgement of their importance in the lives of Singaporeans to the complaints that there are too many foreigners competing with Singaporeans for ‘scarce’ resources” (p. 170, quotation marks in original). While the themes and images that he identifies are about migrant workers, these relate to the definitions of a good citizen as well because migrant workers are often talked about in binary opposition with Singaporeans.

Lim (2014) provides a similar study which examines the images of new citizens and permanent residents in Singapore news media. She prefaces her discussion with a characterization of the role of media in shaping conversations in Singapore. She claims that the media in Singapore is not quite the same as in other countries because while the government seems to be aware of the need for an independent press, it continues to influence, perhaps even control, the direction of the press (e.g. deciding on the Board of Directors of news companies, which would have implications on how the news company is run). This characterization will become relevant in Chapter 5, where I discuss representations of citizenship and citizenship categories in public media texts.

Lim uses this characterization to emphasize how Singapore media frame social issues. As she claims, “As gatekeeper of the public sphere, Singapore’s mass media is thus able to admit, limit and even stifle voices and

ideas from entering the public debate; this inevitably sets the framework that governs the way readers think” (p. 197). She also describes media as a space where shared meanings on norms can be negotiated, given that media allows different members of Singapore society to have a conversation about social issues. With this premise, she identifies three main themes that are talked about in relation to new citizens and permanent residents in Singapore newspapers: social integration, regulation of immigrant flows and criteria for immigration, and maintaining a strong citizen core (p. 200). She regards these themes as a way of finding out what “integration” entails in Singapore. The themes she identified are directly linked not just to how new citizens and permanent residents can be characterized, but also to how they are expected to act in order to integrate into Singapore society. The analytical value of the themes she identifies are comparable to Tan’s (2014) findings because they both show that citizenship categories are made salient in everyday discourses, and how official discourses on citizenship trickle down to everyday discourses, especially in fueling resentment.

Moreover, given that news discourses are directly linked to real-world events such as immigration policies and actual cases of abuse of migrant workers, the representations of migrant workers that result from them inevitably reflect the official discourses as well. This can be construed as an example of how inextricably related official and unofficial discourses are in Singapore. Since news media discourses revolve around the importance of salience of specific social issues, it can be said that the official discourses reflected in the representations are salient enough to be picked up by news media. However, studies like Tan’s (2014) and Lim’s (2014) do not provide an



examination of how these actually relate to people's lives and experiences. This thesis aims to address this point. As I will show later, it is important to look at the narratives of people as well, because they are part of the circulation of the discourses about citizenship in Singapore.

It is worth noting that studies about representations of citizenship categories also focus on how citizenship statuses intersect with other social variables, such as race and class. For example, Liu (2014) argues that ethnicity may contribute to tensions revolving around citizenship statuses. In her study, which focuses on media discourses as well, examines how discourses around Chinese immigrants in Singapore—which are the biggest group of immigrants in Singapore due to the government's aim of preserving the CMIO racial makeup of the Singapore population. She argues that media discourses on Chinese immigrants show an incompatibility between the state's and the grassroots' valuation of citizenship vis-à-vis ethnicity. On the one hand, the government thinks that Chinese immigrants can easily integrate with the local Chinese due to their ethnic similarity; on the other hand, she claims that "...in the eyes of 'individual' Singaporeans, there is more heterogeneity 'among the Chinese' than 'homogeneity'" (p. 1235). Hence, she argues that identities based on ethnic and national lines can add to how the notion of citizenship is understood by civil society, individuals, and government. This poses key challenges in how non-citizens can be integrated into Singapore, because "...the state's integration efforts have led to a substitution of ethnicity by nationality, which places citizenship at the centre of the nation-building project" (p. 1233).

While the studies above focus on what the said representations are and what their implications are, they do not thoroughly investigate how those representations are formed to begin with, especially in terms of how different discourses relate to one another, and how certain notions get picked up by other people. One plausible reason for this is that while their papers involve discourse analysis, this is done from a non-linguistic tradition. This is why the themes that they pointed out are based on the content of the articles, and why they do not probe into how such content is facilitated and mediated linguistically. I believe a linguistic investigation of the said representations would be productive; after all, these representations are mediated by linguistic processes. As Wee (2015) argues:

Preceding and subsequent interactions provide nuances to how individual speech acts are interpreted or even identified. Only once actual discursive moves and the stances adopted are looked at – and themselves considered over an extensive series of interactions – do we then have a finer-grained and more historically informed appreciation of the evolving relationship between language and politics (p. 476).

Wee's (2015) point on the relationship between language and politics is important because it reminds us of the need to look at how this affects everyday life. Seeing how representations and definitions of citizenship in Singapore manifests in everyday interactions is important because it reveals how the notion of citizenship is called into being by people as they live their lives.

In an attempt to both acknowledge the official and unofficial discourses about the good citizen and how they are received by people who are caught in the middle of citizenship processes, Montsion (2012) proposes the notion of (un)desirability. He argues that (un)desirability is based not only on economic contributions and local affiliation from citizens; it is also based on whether citizens adopt a cosmopolitan mindset as part of the economic and social cosmopolitan orientation of Singapore society. This cosmopolitan aspiration is consistent with many previous studies (e.g. Ho, 2006; Ho, 2008; Ho, 2011; Ong & Yeoh, 2012; Yeoh, 2013; to be discussed in greater detail in the following section).

Montsion (2012) claims that while this cosmopolitan mindset is not explicitly addressed in the official discourses of the government, such as in National Education and Active Citizenship, it seems to be an important concern for members of civil society. He discusses:

The notion of un/desirability highlights how nationality and citizenship can be deconstructed to the level of individual skill sets and attributes. Concretely, it takes the form of detailed recruitment and immigration policies aimed at gathering the brightest, richest and most ambitious subjects who fit with the state's perceived interests. In the context of Singapore, the desirable subject is...privileged and/or very bright students, mostly Chinese or American, young professionals and successful or ambitious business people who provide knowledge, business and market-driven opportunities... [the group of desirable subjects] is composed of privileged

demographics that consume mobility and opportunities to transit between East and West (p. 471).

Given that he focuses on the “brightest, richest and most ambitious subjects who fit with the state’s perceived interests,” he suggests that even citizens who provide significant economic contributions—which is the spirit of the merit-based logic of citizenship applications—may still be perceived as undesirable if they do not utilize their “mobility and opportunities to transit between East and West.” This suggests a few things. First, the official discourse revolving around meritocracy, multiculturalism, and pragmatism may be challenged by unofficial discourses such as that of (un)desirability based on cosmopolitan values. Second, the state’s mechanisms of creating good citizens (e.g. National Education and Active Citizenship) may not be enough, because people in Singapore have changing requirements from new citizens which the national rhetoric does not directly address. Montsion (2012) describes this as a manifestation of neoliberalism because citizens tend to be considered as “self-governed entrepreneurs” (p. 469). He claims this is a form of neoliberalism because people are expected to embody certain social values (e.g. economic contributions, local affiliation, and cosmopolitan mindsets) even though the government does not necessarily provide sufficient forms of assistance to do so. Whether this is true or not needs further investigation, because the studies on National Education and Active Citizenship mentioned above show that the government at least tries to help citizens, which may suggest that Montsion’s point on neoliberalism needs to be further interrogated. Finally, the notion of (un) desirability shows how people can internalize the official and unofficial discourses around them and they try to

address those as they live their lives. However, more studies need to be done in order to find out how these translate to actual participation in the process of discursively constructing citizenship, and how people actually orient to the discourses around them.

#### *2.4.1.3. Synthesis*

In this section, I discussed how the notion of “citizenship” is operationalized in Singapore from the perspective of different members of Singapore society. By giving several examples of the research done on how citizenship is represented in various forms of discourses, this section shows how citizenship is a notion that can be discursively constructed. It also underscores the need to understand how different discourses about citizenship relate to one another in Singapore, because this relationship shows how citizenship can mean different things to different people yet can also be imposed on some people as if it were a fixed and easily definable concept. Because of this, this thesis aims to explore how a sociolinguistic lens can help us understand how people come up with varying and malleable definitions of citizenship and how these definitions affect people. While the studies mentioned in this section discuss how citizenship is represented and constructed, they do not approach them using the key premises of sociolinguistics, despite the fact that these representations of citizenship are rooted in language. This thesis aims to address this gap.

In the next section, I discuss how citizenship relates to one of the pressing issues in Singapore: transnationalism and its impact on identities.

This is an important topic because it directly relates to new citizenship in Singapore.

#### 2.4.2. Citizenship, Transnationalism, and Identities

As discussed in the previous section, the citizenship policies of Singapore are crafted to match Singapore's local and global needs. This means that citizenship needs to simultaneously construct an authentic local identity given that the construction of a cogent national identity remains a key concern in Singapore because of its long history of immigration and multiculturalism, and to meet the current demands of globalization of which the Singapore economy heavily capitalizes on. These demands have shifted from its post-independence state, which generally revolved around pragmatism, meritocracy, and multiculturalism espoused by the government. The government now aspires to address new challenges brought about by its status of being a global city, which explains the need to incorporate cosmopolitanism in its national imagination. In the following section, I discuss key texts on cosmopolitanism in Singapore that directly relate to citizenship. Admittedly, there exists a wide pool of scholarship about cosmopolitanism in Singapore, which I do not intend to comprehensively review in this chapter. This is a conscious choice—I envision this section not as an exhaustive discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of cosmopolitanism in Singapore; rather, I see it as an overview of how cosmopolitanism affects the discourses about citizenship in Singapore, because this is directly relevant to the central concerns of this thesis, such as the role of transnationalism in identity construction.

#### 2.4.2.1. *Cosmopolitanism in Singapore*

While there exists a wide pool of scholarly works on the role of cosmopolitanism in Singapore, it is worth noting that “cosmopolitanism” in Singapore is particularly nuanced to its current material conditions, which departs from earlier connotations of the “borderless” (Ohmae, 1990) world that overemphasizes the intertwined relationship of the nation to global affairs that inevitably discounts the relevance of the nation-state in the globalized world<sup>11</sup>. The case of Singapore suggests that this view is, more often than not, an overstatement: the current material conditions in Singapore seem to show that the nation-state remains, or arguably even gets strengthened, by the processes it encounters as it gradually grooms itself as a global city-state.

This “Singapore-style cosmopolitanism” (Ong & Yeoh, 2012, p. 87), as reflected in the Internationalization Strategy and Foreign Talent Policy of the government, has been a focus of many previous studies because Singapore is ‘...a useful example of an emergent global city where a state-engineered “cosmopolitanization” has been central to aspirations of top-tier global city status’ (p. 84). What are the key characteristics of this type of cosmopolitanism espoused by the Singapore government? Ong and Yeoh (2012) describe it as simultaneously aiming to prepare Singaporeans for global mobility while hoping that they become welcoming of foreign talents and

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<sup>11</sup> Cosmopolitanism is a well-established and heavily researched concept in the social sciences. It is not my intention to review those studies in this section. This thesis does not aim to unpack “cosmopolitanism” as a concept; rather, it is interested in finding out how “cosmopolitanism” in Singapore—a word that is explicitly used in different discourses in Singapore—affects the discursive construction of citizenship. For a comprehensive bibliography of the major studies about and approaches to cosmopolitanism, see Beck and Sznaider’s (2006) literature overview. For a good summary and critique of earlier perspectives on cosmopolitanism, see Calhoun (2002).

making the city conducive for foreign talents. They list two criticisms to this style of cosmopolitanism:

[this type of cosmopolitanism has been criticized as]... “unidirectional” — Singaporeans should not sink roots elsewhere while foreign talents are encouraged to look upon Singapore as home (Ho, 2006) — and exclusionary, where the “underbelly of low-skilled, low-status ‘foreign workers’ ” that sustains the economy has been systematically forgotten (Yeoh, 2004) (p. 87; quotation marks and citations in original).

The “cosmopolitan intentions” (p. 86) of the Singapore government primarily stem from the government’s desire to transform Singapore as a “cosmopolis—an attractive efficient and vibrant city exuding confidence and charm and a magnetic hub of people, minds, talents, ideas and knowledge” (Goh, 1999; cited in Ong & Yeoh, 2012, p. 86). By transforming Singapore into a cosmopolis, the government hopes to attract foreign peoples and resources while strengthening its national core. This is affirmed by the late Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew himself when he claimed that:

If we are dynamic, we will attract talent, we will grow because we have more talent. When I say talent, it means people who add to the dynamism of that society. Singaporeans, if I can choose an analogy, we are the hard disk of a computer, the foreign talent are the megabytes you add to your storage capacity. So your computer never hangs because you got enormous storage capacity (cited in Yeoh, 2013, p.100).



The metaphor of the hard drive shows that foreign talent is seen as an additional force that can complement and even improve the domestic resources of Singapore. This additive perspective underpins the general rhetoric of immigration policy in Singapore: welcoming the foreign can strengthen the domestic—as long as they harmoniously work with each other in everyday affairs.

The late MM Lee's view on the Singapore cosmopolis was already hinted at almost a decade before. In 1999, Former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong explicitly discussed the authenticity/cosmopolitanism dichotomy in his National Day Rally Speech. He talked about two categories commonly used in Singapore: the “cosmopolitans” and the “heartlanders,” and how they should strive to have a good relationship with each other for the betterment of Singapore. Cosmopolitans are people who are mobile and internationally oriented, and who tend to speak English and generate high incomes. Heartlanders are people who are less mobile who have a strong local orientation, and who tend to speak Singlish and might not have skills valuable outside of Singapore but serve as the core of Singapore (Goh, 1999). He implies that the success of Singapore is based on an amicable relationship between its cosmopolitans and heartlanders.

Tan and Yeoh (2006) acknowledge these views of former PMs Lee and Goh when they claimed that “...the Singaporean ideal of cosmopolitanism seems to include both the cosmopolitan and the nationalist existing together symbiotically, combining a global, yet local, outlook in life. In other words, Singapore needs to spread its wings to succeed as a global, cosmopolitan country, while being able to retain its roots and the richness of culture in all its

multiracial diversity” (p. 151). They add another dimension to these social categories made by Goh: the dimension of rootedness. They claim that cosmopolitans and heartlanders can be further subdivided into rooted and rootless ones—the former being the type of people who still maintain their “heart in their country of origin” (p. 151) despite being able to form affiliations with other countries. They state that the government aims to shape the outlook of both heartlanders and cosmopolitans so that they can continue to harmoniously co-exist in Singapore. On the one hand, the government aspires to make its heartlander citizens accept the cosmopolitan population as part of Singapore by making them understand the value of transforming Singapore into a cosmopolis. On the other hand, the government hopes to convince its cosmopolitan citizens rooted enough so that they are “able to feel comfortable anywhere in the world, yet retain an emotional connection to Singapore...[and] choose to make Singapore their home despite the multitude of alternatives and choices that are open to them” (p. 165).

These studies give us an overview of how the notion of cosmopolitanism has influenced the material conditions and the discourses about citizenship in Singapore. There have been many related studies on how cosmopolitanism affects everyday life. For instance, there have been research done on how schools inculcate cosmopolitan values in addition to nationalist ones, such as how students develop a cosmopolitan outlook in schools (De Costa, 2014), or how classroom materials and curricula such as those used in literature classes also integrate this cosmopolitan orientation (e.g. Poon, 2010). The role of English in promoting cosmopolitanism in schools is central to these studies: as Choo (2014) argues, English is depicted in schools as a

primary resource for enabling the students to develop their “communicative cosmopolitan intent” (p. 679). There are also studies on non-state-sponsored cosmopolitanism, which look at how cosmopolitanism is integrated into “unofficial” aspects of everyday life in Singapore, such as in terms of food (e.g. Bishop, 2011; Duruz, 2016) and expatriate clubs (e.g. Beaverstock, 2011). These studies are important because they demonstrate how the notion of cosmopolitanism is operationalized in many aspects of social life in Singapore, which is comparable to the discourses of citizenship as shown in the previous section. They also provide a glimpse of how the notion of cosmopolitanism adds another layer of intricacy in how (groups of) people are portrayed, and how they live their lives.

What underpins these studies is the link of cosmopolitanism to identity. Constructing cosmopolitan identities has become an integral part of performing citizenship in Singapore. For instance, Montsion’s (2012) discussion focuses on how the notion of (un)desirability is premised on the reconciliation of these two types of identities. In terms of public discourses, the heartlander/cosmopolitan dichotomy has attained a high level of discursive circulation among people in Singapore up to now, despite the fact that the speech was made two decades ago.

That a good migrant or citizen in Singapore needs to incorporate cosmopolitan aspirations is consistent with Ho’s (2006) study mentioned above. Wee (2015, p. 468) affirms this view in his examination of the changing rhetoric of speeches of Singapore Prime Ministers about citizenship. He reported that in the speeches from three decades ago, “...Singapore and Singaporeans were pitted against a largely hostile outside world, and the

citizenry were thus encouraged to see their future and livelihood territorially linked to the island itself.” However, more recent speeches reflect the changing socio-political and demographic nature of Singapore; in these speeches, “...the dichotomy of ‘us’ and ‘them’ had been blurred, since it was now accented that Singaporeans were highly mobile. Also, foreigners were now viewed as talent that could contribute to Singapore.” This implies that identities tied to citizenship categories—whether envisioned by the government in policy, represented by people in discourse, or performed by people on the level of the everyday—are integrated into the framework of cosmopolitan aspirations or intentions. This is the focus of the next section, where I discuss studies about transnational migrants.

#### *2.4.2.2. Transnational Migrants*

Transnational migrants (or sometimes referred to as “transmigrants” in the literature)—people who are in the gray area within the citizen/non-citizen binary due to their long-term yet transient position and status in their “old” and “new” countries of residence—have also been a focus of similar research. Yang (2014) examines how “foreign talent”—a term used to refer to skilled professionals or promising students who were recruited by the Singapore government to study in Singapore through scholarships (pp. 419-421), or colloquially referred to as the “Top 1%” of immigrants—are still treated as outsiders due to their perceived lack of authenticity even though they definitely meet the requirements of the merit-based immigration policy in Singapore. She argues:

...the view of foreign talent as a threat to Singapore's national identity is simplistic. Rather, concern over foreign talent represents the very site from which some sense of national togetherness and belonging emerges, through a relative and negative logic. This identity-making logic is *relative* and *negative* because it involves no essentialist claim to or positive assertion of a Singaporean national identity; instead, by dismissing the foreign talent Others as inauthentic—inauthentic talents, bogus moral subjects, and ultimately, **inauthentic citizens ineligible for incorporation into the national body**—this logic engenders a *sense* or *feeling* of belonging among Singaporeans. In other words, foreign talent are the margins that make a “core” possible, even though that “core” remains emergent and undefined (pp. 410-411; italics and quotation marks in original, boldface mine).

Lam and Yeoh (2004) discuss this in their study of elite Chinese-Malaysian transmigrants in Singapore. They argue that transmigrants tend to negotiate the notions of “home” and “identity” through their “simultaneous embeddedness” (p. 157). However, this negotiation is not free of struggle, since transmigrants still tend to face social issues in both Singapore and Malaysia. This implies that the simultaneous embeddedness of transmigrants connotes processes of social identification and differentiation based on citizenship statuses not only in their new country of residence but also in their home country as well. Moreover, this suggests that in the case of elite transmigrants, the political aspects of citizenship as a category becomes less

significant than its social aspects. For instance, these elite migrants do not necessarily face the risk of being easily evicted out of Singapore given that many of them tend to take up permanent residency or citizenship in Singapore (unlike the low-skilled migrants or foreign brides discussed above), yet they have to deal with the process of social differentiation on an everyday level. In other words, inasmuch as they have successfully proven their eligibility to be considered Singapore residents, per the government's standards, they still face the compelling need to flexibly develop their notions of "home" and "identity," which results in the challenging of the "functional equation" (Bammer, 1994, p. 94 in Lam & Yeoh, 2004, p. 158) of home and identity.

Lim (2016) presents analogous findings in her paper on how transnational student migrants from China reconcile aspects of their identities. She claims that despite the transnational background of these students, they capitalize on essentialized notions of what it means to be "Chinese" and "Singaporean" in crafting their transnational identities. This is similar to Lam and Yeoh's (2004) study above because it illustrates how transmigrants traverse the boundaries between their countries of current residence and origin. This is reminiscent of Ortega's (2015) point on the need to scrutinize multiculturalism and its impact on identities not just in the level of policy—the resounding myth that the government uses as a pillar of most of its social policies—but also on the level of how people actually take up multiculturalism and appropriate them to suit their goals. Following her logic, people can reappropriate the ideology of multiculturalism to challenge the government-imposed understanding of it. She further argues:

...individuals can utilize the discourse of multiculturalism in forwarding their own interests and concerns. In the Singapore context, individual Singaporeans transform discourses of CMIO [Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others] multiculturalism, creating a counter-discourse that challenges state immigration policies. Here, multiculturalism serves as the normative standard to evaluate migrants' capacity to assimilate into Singapore society and, ultimately, becomes the justification for the rejection of race and class similarities (p. 961).

Additionally, Ortiga's (2015) argument suggests that multiculturalism—an ideology strongly advocated for by the government as a good thing—can be appropriated by people for goals which may be construed as incompatible with the government's, such as when people use it to discount similarities and accentuate differences instead. More importantly, it seems to give credence to the idea that multiculturalism can be enacted on an everyday level, and that banal judgments, ideologies, practices, and discourses may translate to bigger social processes; hence, they should be comprehensively examined (cf. Wise, 2009).

This suggests that the citizen/non-citizen divide permeates the fabric of Singapore society not just because of eligibility requirements or economic impacts, but also because of social issues that make Singaporeans feel that they have to distance themselves from non-Singaporeans, which may allow them to construct the “core” of being Singaporean. The implication of this is that it is not enough for immigrants to integrate into Singapore through a change of their citizenship status; rather, they also need to perform a sense of

authenticity as new Singaporeans. The extent of such authenticity and the resources that can be used in this performance need to be further investigated. Is it enough for new Singaporeans to incorporate “new” values which are typically associated with local-born Singaporeans, or do they have to erase aspects of their “old” selves as well? This results in more questions. Are there other social issues or variables that intersect with their status as new citizens? Do new citizens need to go beyond their perceived newness and attempt to be like local-born citizens? If they do, how can they do this? If they do not, will it be acceptable? Can new citizens do something about this tension? These questions will be relevant in Chapters 6 and 7.

These studies show that because of the economic and social repercussions of immigration in Singapore, the notion of citizenship becomes a resource for the (re)construction of group divisions, which may or may not be the same as the actual political differences of such categories. This implies that stakeholders in Singapore—such as the government, Singaporeans, and immigrants—can use these political categories to come up with various forms of social differentiation in accordance with their goals. Hence, the question is not whether citizenship is a contestable political category; rather, the more important point of inquiry is how this takes place, who does the contestation, what the contestation is for, and why this is important in understanding the notion of citizenship better.

The studies above tend to start from the assumed existence of the category of citizenship, and they aim to dissect identities based on that. For example, studies on transmigrants already assume their “trans” position as an introduction to the focus of what people do about their “trans” position.



However, it would be good to come from a position where citizenship categories, or the “trans” category, are not assumed, and begin the inquiry with an analysis of how it comes into being, such as how people actually see and position themselves in relation to the notion of citizenship. This gives credence to one of the major goals of this study, which aims to address how the said categories are formed as a precursor to the examination of what people do with them and why.

#### *2.4.2.3 Synthesis*

The cosmopolitan/heartlander dichotomy, as well as the research on transmigrants, allude to the importance of the role of language, which scholars such as Montsion (2012) and Ho (2006) do not emphasize in their discussion. While Wee’s (2015) study provides an attempt to address this by looking at how official discourses use linguistic resources to construct citizenship, it does not look at everyday discourses, especially from those who actually experience the impact of citizenship categories on an everyday level, and how they affect people’s lived experiences. This can also be said about the studies on National Education and Active Citizenship mentioned above. While they sufficiently demonstrate how the cosmopolitan mindset has become an integral part of imagining Singapore citizenship and how this affects the conceptualization of citizenship policies, they do not specifically show why and how language becomes a significant issue in the production of desirable citizens, especially on an everyday level.

This is why it is important to examine how language actually influences, or perhaps even facilitates, the construction of citizenship. There

are two points about language that the studies above imply but not explicitly state. First, language can be viewed as a resource for representing people, group categories, identities, and ideologies such as those surrounding citizenship. Following this view, it then becomes imperative to examine the said representations through a sociolinguistic lens because it would allow us to approach the nuances of the formation of representations. A sociolinguistic lens would enrich the different discourse analyses provided by the studies mentioned above which come from different social science traditions. Second, language can be construed as a tool for instigating social change or implementing policies, such as the management of citizenship and diversity in general. In this light, it becomes important to zoom into the role of language in various social processes related to citizenship. These two ways of looking at language should be analytically foregrounded to better understand how citizenship is discursively constructed, and how people orient themselves to that discursive construction.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to open up possibilities for approaching citizenship in Singapore through three different vantage points: the history of immigration in Singapore; the current citizenship policies in Singapore; and the existing body of scholarly work from the social sciences that lay out the ground for the analytical trajectory of this study.

Understanding the history of immigration in Singapore, albeit in a rather simplified fashion as presented in this chapter, is a prerequisite for the appreciation of the current socioeconomic conditions surrounding

contemporary issues of immigration and citizenship in Singapore. Immigration has long been stitched in Singapore's social fabric, even from its inception as a nation-state, and remains important to the current social dynamics in Singapore. This study acknowledges the role of this long history of immigration in understanding how citizenship is now being discursively constructed in Singapore.

The brief survey of the current citizenship application requirements in Singapore is important to this study because such policies not only relate to government policies but also the dominant discourses articulated by different members of Singapore society. In this chapter, I demonstrated how the said frameworks need to be consistently interrogated. While the government lays out concrete means of understanding citizenship in light of pragmatism, meritocracy, and multiculturalism, they are not able to pre-empt the many ideological repercussions of such frameworks on the discourses that members of the Singapore society make. These frameworks are important because they situate Singapore in the theoretical debates on what "citizenship" means in this day and age.

While these studies provide a comprehensive view of the various issues surrounding the notion of citizenship in Singapore, they tend to focus on what people in Singapore do about the political categories of citizenship, instead of investigating how citizenship can be constructed as a concept through discourse. This provides insights into how social differentiation unfolds in Singapore, which influences why people do what they do with such political categories of citizenship.

Moreover, the studies above view *social differences* as a premise of analysis, as seen in what the state does to mitigate the challenges arising from social differences and how people adopt strategies to deal with differences. In this study, I aim to enrich this view by showing that differences can be negotiated by people: “differences” may evolve and change based on how people deal with it. Understanding the process of social differentiation, such as how people take up or reappropriate public discourses around them or how they orient themselves towards them, could deepen our understanding of citizenship in Singapore.

This chapter already gave us an overview of the relationship between language and citizenship in the context of Singapore citizenship and migration. In the following chapter, we will highlight the role of language more by looking at sociolinguistic approaches to language and citizenship.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Language, Diversity, and Citizenship: Towards a Metapragmatic Approach**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the relevance of understanding the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore to sociolinguistics. I make two arguments. First, sociolinguistics can enrich our understanding of citizenship by allowing us to appreciate how different discourses from various members of society relate to each other, and how they influence the experiences and ideologies of the people who are exposed and subject to these discourses on an everyday level. Second, the case of Singapore and its processes of citizenship can contribute to the field of sociolinguistics, specifically in terms of how the Singapore example provides insights into our understanding of language ideologies.

While this chapter focuses on the existing research on sociolinguistics and citizenship studies, I first provide a brief overview of theoretical paradigms on diversity management from the social sciences which underpin many sociolinguistic studies on citizenship (Section 3.2). It must be emphasized that this section does not aim to present a comprehensive overview of all diversity management frameworks in citizenship studies. The studies discussed in this section are primary texts that are commonly referred to in the sociolinguistic literature on citizenship and diversity, which is the central concern of this chapter.

After this overview, I discuss studies on sociolinguistics and citizenship which serve as the sociolinguistic inspiration of this thesis (Section 3.3). This section is divided into three: ideologies of language testing and citizenship procedures; discursive representations of citizenship and citizenship categories; and everyday sociolinguistic enactments of citizenship. The texts discussed in this section were delimited based on their relevance to the research questions that this thesis aims to address. These three subsections become the foundation of the succeeding analytical chapters of this thesis.

Finally, I propose an approach that addresses such concerns—the metapragmatic approach to citizenship (Section 3.4). I provide a discussion of the key concepts from metapragmatics that can be applied to the analysis of citizenship, which also serves as the theoretical framework of this thesis. I conclude this chapter by providing a summary of the chapter.

### **3.2. Theoretical and Analytical Approaches to Diversity Management**

In *Language Testing, Migration and Citizenship: Cross-National Perspectives on Integration Regimes*, a volume that approaches language testing regimes from “...the perspective of the nation-states’ machinery” by focusing on “rites of passage” for migrants and the “measures that are imposed on the immigrant population,” Extra, Spotti & Van Avermaet (2009) preface their inquiry by describing “the extremes of the conceptual spectrum range from assimilation to multiculturalism” that underpin research on language, citizenship, and integration. They describe this spectrum as follows:

The concept of assimilation is based on the premise that cultural differences between IM [immigrant minority] groups

and established majority groups should and will disappear over time in a society which is proclaimed to be culturally homogeneous from the majority point of view. At the other end of the spectrum, the concept of multiculturalism is based on the premise that such differences are an asset to a pluralistic society, which actually promotes cultural diversity in terms of new resources and opportunities. While the concept of assimilation focuses on unilateral tasks for newcomers, the concept of multiculturalism focuses on multilateral tasks for all inhabitants in changing societies (p. 11).

This spectrum is important because the concepts of assimilation and multiculturalism are reflected in the different narratives and policies that states use to manage the challenges of diversity and to (re)configure how states define “citizenship.” Because of this, many studies in the social sciences (such as those described in the previous chapter) and in sociolinguistics (to be discussed in the next section) tend to have assimilation and multiculturalism as a premise for their investigation of how citizenship is operationalized in different societies. This is a reasonable research premise because these two concepts have become dominant not only in terms of scholarship but also in terms of policy; hence, how they influence studies on citizenship needs to be problematized. While this thesis inevitably alludes to the concepts of assimilation and multiculturalism as useful concepts in the construction of its argument, it also aims to problematize the concepts based on the current material conditions in Singapore. As discussed in Chapter 2, Singapore has a

long history with diversity and various attempts at exhausting the assimilation-multiculturalism spectrum in managing its citizenship policies.

Before I proceed to the review of the sociolinguistic studies on citizenship, I first provide a brief overview of key approaches to diversity management: segregationism, assimilation, and multiculturalism. This overview of the main theoretical and analytical approaches to diversity is rather simplified: the goal of this overview is to start the conversation about the assimilation-multiculturalism spectrum which has significantly influenced the sociolinguistic studies that inspired this study. Moreover, I must emphasize that many of the studies discussed below are products of Western scholarship. While there are studies on diversity management in non-Western contexts—for example, Banks' (2007) compilation on diversity management and citizenship education which includes studies not just on Western contexts but also on Africa, East Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, and Syed and Özbilgin's (2010) compilation on diversity management in Asia—the frameworks that remain influential in the sociolinguistics of citizenship tend to still be focused on the “established” Western frameworks discussed below. Given that the following section aims to provide an overview of the diversity management frameworks that remain central to studies on the sociolinguistics of citizenship (discussed in Section 3.3), I decided to focus on these studies in this chapter.

The three approaches that I discuss in this section were born out of the need to understand how societies address the issues that go along with diversity. The premise of migration-based diversity research is that the movements of people and the resources they carry with them (cf. Blommaert,



2010) are rooted in difference, which have a potential to influence—positively or negatively—societies due to the change in demographic and social management that come with it. Difference comes with potential challenges and is therefore necessary to be managed to ensure that societies can continue to harmoniously function despite the changes brought about by diversity.

Alexander (2001) uses the word “incorporation” to discuss how societies manage different groups of people. He defines it as “...the possibility of closing the gap between stigmatized categories of persons—persons whose particular identities have been relegated to the invisibility of private life—and the utopian promises that in principle regulate civil life, principles that imply equality, solidarity, and respect among members of society” (p. 242). In a way, incorporation and the management of diversity revolve around the goal of ensuring that difference can be acknowledged and addressed with a sense of fairness and justice (Young, 1990; Kymlicka, 1995; Carens, 2000; Alexander, 2001; Kivisto, 2012). Young (1990) argues that a “...good society...does not eliminate or transcend group difference... [rather]... group differentiation is both an inevitable and desirable aspect of modern social processes” (p. 163). While this sounds simple and reasonable, the reality behind actual policies that address diversity is that difference tends to be harder to manage than expected<sup>12</sup>. Hence, it is important to note that most, if not all, approaches to diversity are crafted to manage diversity by promoting what is good for society, they need to be interrogated because they tend to result in many issues

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander (2001) distances himself from Young’s (1990) argument because of “...its empirical validity and its moral status” (p. 239). He questions whether Young’s argument is backed by a “realistic theory” (p. 239) of how justice and social life actually operate in societies.

as well, which suggests that they can backfire and exacerbate problems instead.

Given that the goal of this section is to explain how these approaches relate to language and sociolinguistics, I will not present a comprehensive review of the approaches. Rather, I will present key characterizations of the approaches as well as the primary concerns that scholars have expressed about them. This would allow me to focus on showing how such concepts, alongside the criticisms and issues that go with them, have influenced sociolinguistic studies on citizenship, and how a sociolinguistic lens can deepen our understanding not only of these approaches but of diversity management in general.

### 3.2.1. Segregationism

The first approach that aims to manage diversity is segregationism. Koopmans, Statham, Giugni, and Passy (2005) define segregationism as the “exclusion from the political community of migrant newcomers who do not share the ethnocultural background of the majority society” (p. 11). They argue that this approach is comparable to the “guest worker” approach, which he characterized as an approach that does not expect migrants to adjust to the cultural values of the host society, which comes at the cost of them not receiving any political rights from the society. They identify this as a problematic approach because “[n]o democratic state can uphold a situation for very long in which a significant percentage of the permanently resident population is excluded from political rights” (12). They state that most states have veered away from this approach. However, they also argue that even

though segregationism in its purest form is now viewed pejoratively, it still manifests itself in policies that are usually labelled as non-segregationist, such as how most European countries implement asylum and refugee policies as well as how it has been co-opted as a core tenet of the “New Right,” which tend to suggest that despite cultures being equal to each other, they should be “...kept separate and “intact” in order to prevent a loss of identity and social cohesion that would benefit neither the majority society nor minority cultures” (p. 12; quotation marks in original). The eventual fall of segregationism entailed the need to come up with approaches that could better manage diversity, both in the short- and the long-term.

### 3.2.2. Assimilation

Assimilation is another approach to diversity management. It is a process that is usually associated with the policies of the United States and of France (e.g. Bertossi, 2011; for a comprehensive review of the definitions of “assimilation,” see Gordon, 1964: Chapter 3). Alexander (2001) describes assimilation as follows:

...[when] out-group members are allowed to enter fully into civil life on the condition that they shed their polluted primordial identities. Assimilation is possible to the degree that socialization channels exist that can provide “civilizing” or “purifying” processes—through interaction, education, or mass mediated representation—that allow *persons* to be separated from their primordial *qualities*. *It is not the qualities themselves that are purified or accepted but the persons who*

*formerly, and often still privately, bear them* (pp. 243-245; quotation marks and italics in original).

This means that out-group members are expected to not show their different qualities publicly which may allow them to transition from “being different” to being “one of us” (p. 244, quotation marks in original). Because of this, assimilation has been described as a process where minorities are expected to alter their qualities to suit the norms of the majority—which seems to imply that it is a one-way process (Glazer, 1997; Extra, Spotti & Van Avermaet., 2009; Alexander, 2001; Kivisto, 2012; Modood, 2013). Castles (1995, p. 298) argues that countries have started to abandon assimilationist policies because of their perceived ineffectiveness at making minority groups assimilate into society and the backlash that they generate, such as when minority groups form associations among each other exclusively (e.g. keeping their social networks, speaking their mother tongues instead of the majority language, etc.) instead of making ties with the majority group.

### 3.2.3. Multiculturalism

Alexander (2001) provides a good summary of how multiculturalism differs from assimilation:

In assimilation...the ambition of out-groups is to replace ascriptive identification with status based on achievement. In multiculturalism, the ambition is to achieve—to perform and to display—what once appeared to be an ascriptively rooted, primordial identity. Because particular differences do not have to be eliminated or denied in order this this kind of

incorporation to be gained, the sharp split between private and public realms recedes...This is what the “recognition of difference,” an important ideological slogan as well as a philosophical idea, means in sociological terms (p. 246; quotation marks in original).

In his landmark text about the shift from assimilation to multiculturalism, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*, Glazer (1997) describes multiculturalism as ‘...a position that rejects assimilation and the “melting pot” image as an imposition of the dominant culture, and instead prefers such metaphors as the “salad bowl” or the “glorious mosaic,” in which each ethnic and racial element in the population maintains its distinctiveness’ (p. 10; quotation marks in original). He argues that multiculturalism has become a more acceptable approach because of the failures of assimilation—although not necessarily because of its own merits. Multiculturalism is usually associated with pluralism because it acknowledges the value of keeping distinct social groups by minimizing their potential social risks instead of trying to erase them. He implies that the fairly positive regard of multiculturalism is not because multiculturalism is good per se, but because it seems to be a better option than assimilation (cf. Kivisto, 2012).

The view that multiculturalism is about the recognition instead of the erasure of difference comes from a long tradition of studies on multiculturalism (e.g. Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995; Glazer, 1997; Modood, 2005; Parekh, 2000; Young, 1990; among many others). It is important to note that multiculturalism should not be treated as a single approach that is not devoid of any variations or contradictions; rather, it should be viewed as the

overarching label for many different approaches that recognize, but may differently deal with, diversity (see Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010).

Scholars who support multiculturalism tend to subscribe to the rhetoric of social justice, fairness, and equality (e.g. Taylor, 1994; Kivisto, 2012). They believe that multicultural policies should strive to address the problems of segregationist and assimilationist policies not just to achieve what is best for society, but also because of the moral imperative to deal with the concerns of individuals who possess markers of difference.

The changing dynamics of societies and the world at large due to globalization presents new challenges for multiculturalism because social differences tend to be magnified or reconfigured. In current contexts, the valence of traditional social variables in diversity management such as ethnicity—which has underpinned many studies on multiculturalism—cannot be easily presupposed because of the complex interfaces between social variables which may have been reconfigured by the changing material conditions of societies. This is why some scholars acknowledge the importance of Vertovec's (2007) notion of super-diversity to (post-)multiculturalism. He describes super-diversity as a “multi-dimensional perspective on diversity” (p. 1026) and as “...a term intended to capture a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything many migrant-receiving countries have previously experienced” (Vertovec, 2010, p. 87). Super-diversity implies a sense of novelty in terms of migration. In his study of diversity in the UK, he claims that super-diversity has emerged because of new forms and flows of immigration which challenge traditional and predictable means of handling the differences of gender, ethnicity, language,

religion, class, etc. in the UK—leading to: “new patterns of inequality and prejudice,” “new patterns of segregation,” new experiences of space and ‘contact’,” “new forms of cosmopolitanism and creolisation,” “new ‘bridgeheads’ of migration,” “secondary migration patterns,” and the need to revisit traditional approaches to transnationalism, integration, methodology, and policy (pp. 1045-1047; quotation marks in original).

While super-diversity has become a good “summary term” (p. 1026) for the new forms of coalescences of social factors that affect how diversity is managed and affects people’s lives, it has also been criticized, especially with how it frames the “new” and the “super” aspects of diversity. This can be seen in the questions that Reyes (2014) asks: ‘Who, in fact, perceives the world as superdiverse? Who experiences it as superdiverse? If it is superdiverse now, how was it diverse to some “regular” degree before?’ (p. 368; quotation marks in original). On the one hand, these questions are legitimate in terms of the meta-analytical usefulness of the term given that concepts such as super-diversity need to be interrogated if they are to be linked to actual changes in theoretical or methodological approaches in scholarship. On the other hand, the contributions of the concept insofar as opening up and revisiting scholarly perspectives are concerned are still significant because they serve as a constant reminder to respond to the changing dynamism of diversity and how states manage it.

A common criticism to multiculturalism is that it focuses on top-down approaches, such as state policies, instead of focusing on actual social dynamics of people who experience the issues of multiculturalism. This is the perspective that inspired the birthing of the “everyday multiculturalism”

approach (e.g. Wise & Velayutham, 2009; Wise, 2009; Watson, 2009; Harris, 2009; Colombo, 2010, among others). Scholars who subscribe to everyday multiculturalism believe that it would be insufficient to study multiculturalism just on the level of macro state policies; rather, multiculturalism should pay attention to how people actually live their lives and how this reflects, challenges, reinforces, and relates to their situated experiences, which may or may not involve state policies. Wise and Velayutham (2009) argue that multiculturalism should also examine “how cultural diversity is experienced and negotiated on the ground in everyday situations” (p. 2).

Everyday multiculturalism therefore pays attention to various encounters and lived experiences which emphasizes the role of context and situatedness of every encounter as a unit of analysis, which can show “...how social actors experience and negotiate cultural difference on the ground and how their social relations and identities are shaped and re-shaped in the process” (p. 3). This approach seems to be a good complement to traditional multiculturalism approaches because it allows us to see difference in different forms, scales, and contexts. This also relates to other social concepts that pay attention to everyday interactions, such as the notion of conviviality (cf. Gilroy, 2004; see also Wise & Velayutham, 2014; Neal, Bennett, Cochrane, & Mohan, 2013; Wessendorf, 2014; Amin, 2013). This is not to say that the everyday is divorced from policy, because everyday encounters are also influenced by what happens at the top (Wessendorf, 2013; cf. Bloemraad, 2006). While everyday multiculturalism scholars acknowledge this influence, they also emphasize that this influence can be challenged or resisted, which justifies why everyday encounters should not be neglected. Given that



everyday multiculturalism helps us examine how the sensitivity to diversity does not just happen in particular locales, but also in the everyday negotiations of individuals with respect to the construction of their multicultural identities, I believe it would be a good starting point for the analysis of everyday enactments of citizenship. This is because citizenship adds another layer of complexity to multiculturalism because citizenship statuses can potentially reconfigure the social variables usually discussed by multiculturalism scholars. For instance, social differences based on language, ethnicity, age, gender, etc. may be magnified, reconfigured, or challenged by notions of citizenship. This study aims to contribute to this research direction.

These criticisms show that while multiculturalism aims to address the concerns brought about by segregation and assimilation, it also comes with its own sets of issues. One common criticism to multiculturalism is that it is inherently essentializing. As Phillips (2007) argues, multiculturalism

“...exaggerates the internal unity of cultures, solidifies differences that are currently more fluid, and makes people from other cultures seem more exotic and distinct than they really are. Multiculturalism then appears not as a cultural liberator but as a cultural straitjacket, forcing those described as members of a minority cultural group into a regime of authenticity, denying them the chance to cross cultural borders, borrow cultural influences, define and redefine themselves” (p. 14).

This view is shared by other post-multiculturalist scholars (e.g. Appiah, 2005; Benhabib, 2002; Cowan, 2001; Fraser, 2001; Scheffler, 2007)

who argue that multiculturalism has ended up reaffirming the very essentialist borders that it aims to challenge or subvert (cf. Parekh, 2000). However, this does not mean to say that it should be dismissed—similar to how segregationism almost automatically connotes negative value judgments and how assimilation had to be “transformed” (in Brubaker’s (2001) words) to be relevant in this day and age. Modood (2008) argues that while some criticisms to multiculturalism are legitimate and well-grounded, they should be treated as reasons for making adjustments towards multiculturalist policies so that they would work better, instead of thinking of them as arguments for the abandonment of the approach.

#### 3.2.4. Synthesis

At this point, it is important to note that the three approaches above, despite the criticisms that they face, all started with the goal of promoting (in the case of policies) or understanding (in the case of scholarship) the reconciliation of differences to make societies work harmoniously. What needs to be underscored here is that these approaches are not perfect because an overarching and all-encompassing approach proves to be impossible to craft because every context is different from each other, which means that there will always be nuances that these approaches tend to inevitably miss. Moreover, these approaches also provide a glimpse of how difficult it is to manage diversity.

Perhaps it would be productive to think of diversity management and integration in relation to the setting of reasonable expectations (Carens, 2000). This is based on what states are “*entitled*” (p. 107; italics in original) to expect

from people, what majority groups are expected to do to help minority groups, and what immigrants “*ought*” (p. 108; italics in original) to do in their new society. This perspective suggests that diversity management should revolve around the setting of reasonable expectations from people and enabling them to negotiate what to keep and what to adopt as long as it is compatible with state values. The notion of reasonable expectations connects state policies to everyday life and are compatible with and can enrich benefit traditional and everyday multiculturalism approaches.

The studies mentioned above discuss diversity management with the assumption that social groups may or may not be differentiated by citizenship status. For instance, Carens (2000) develops his argument based on “immigrants” who may or may not be *en route* to citizenship. While I agree that the perspective that citizenship is a political status needs to be constantly interrogated given that the globalized world tends to blur the line between citizenship categories, I think that it is important to probe into how this perspective remains, especially in the context of Singapore. To a certain extent, it can be claimed that Singapore has had a longer history of managing multiculturalism (as discussed in the previous chapter as a founding myth of Singapore) based on ethnic lines of people who live there, instead of having to manage diversity based on citizenship lines, which is what has been happening recently with the influx of “new citizens” in Singapore. Hence, it is important to remember that these approaches primarily stem from scholarship made by Western scholars who study Western contexts, which may not be perfectly compatible with non-Western contexts. This is a common criticism to multiculturalism approaches such as super-diversity, which seem to start with

the assumption that the host societies are homogeneous and immigrant groups represent diversity. The case of Singapore is an example of a host society that has always been very diverse, which has race-based immigration policies (e.g. preserving the CMIO racial demographic composition) that are supposed to represent similarity instead of diversity—which has been interrogated in depth by various studies discussed in Chapter 2. This is not to claim that these approaches should not be applied to the Singapore context at all. Rather, this is a reminder to take these approaches cautiously, because while they can certainly be productive, they need to be tweaked in order to appreciate the nuances of the material conditions of Singapore citizenship.

Part of the necessary tweaking involves the incorporation of transnational perspectives in the understanding of diversity management approaches (Waldinger, 2017; Glick Schiller, 2014; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). Transnationalism started out as a perspective that invokes scholars to not only look at diversity management in a particular state or locale, but also to pay attention to the intricate ties that people have with international flows. In other words, while diversity management approaches revolve around how actors such as the state handles challenges brought about by the social differences of people within its bounds, transnationalism approaches investigate how people—who may rightfully be bounded in a particular nation-state due to their geographic positioning and are therefore subject to diversity management approaches—are still entangled in the web of international mobilities such as the “...circulation of ideas, resources, and communal engagements” (p. 3) that are tied to (international) migration. Hence, research on diversity management can benefit from understanding that

people such as migrants and new citizens are transnational beings, and that their transnational associations and identities should also be considered in the management of diversity. Complementing diversity management approaches with the perspective of transnationalism works well in the context of Singapore because it enables us to appreciate the official and everyday encounters about and discursive constructions of citizenship with respect to the material conditions that surround them, as seen in the notion of, and the studies that subscribe to, flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999). This point will be made more evident in Chapters 6 and 7.

In this theoretical breadth and depth of diversity management, where does language come in? Or perhaps, should language even be an issue? The approaches above tend to treat language as a social category or variable, similar to gender, religion, class, etc. In all the approaches discussed above, language is regarded as a tool that states and people can use to mark groups or themselves—a quality or possession that can be subject to different state, social, or individual regulation—which seems to treat language just with respect to its functional value in managing difference. This means that the symbolic or performative value of language and how it enables people to construct their identities tend to be overlooked by research on diversity management in the social sciences. For instance, Kymlicka (1995) talks about the role of language and representation in multiculturalism, yet this representation denotes political representation and language is treated as a fixed communicative resource that people have. Moreover, these studies tend to look at named languages as fixed and static, and tend to neglect dialects,

varieties, or registers, which are also very crucial in terms of how people actually interact in society.

Moreover, it is important to view language beyond political representation per se and also examine its representational or ideational value. In other words, the literature on diversity management and transnationalism tends to focus on what people do with language, and not necessarily pay attention to what language does to people, or how language shapes how people actually live their lives. People are surrounded by and also actively produce various forms of discourses—especially if we follow the perspective of everyday multiculturalism scholars—which means that language likely plays a role in citizenship more than what the literature from the social sciences above suggests. This then gives credence to a brief review of a few key studies about citizenship from sociolinguistics. This review would help us find out how sociolinguists examine the relationship between language and citizenship, and also make us understand how sociolinguistic research in these topics tend to position itself with respect to the ongoing debates on citizenship and diversity management in the social sciences.

### **3.3. Sociolinguistic Research on Language and Citizenship**

In this section, I provide a short account of the existing literature on sociolinguistics and citizenship. This stems from a long tradition of sociolinguistic research on diversity and migration (e.g. dialectology, language contact, variationist sociolinguistics, World Englishes, bi/multilingualism studies) that focuses on the dialectical relationship between language and diversity influences, and how this furthers our understanding of social

relations. Sociolinguistics has witnessed a shift from the traditional view of speech communities (e.g. Hymes, 1974) to approaches that account for changes in more heterogeneous and dynamic communities, such as the “community of practice” (Lave, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Bucholtz, 1999), “nexus of practices” (Scollon, 2001), “contemporary speech communities” (i.e. contact) (Milroy, 2002), and “super-diversity” (Blommaert 2010; 2013a; 2013b; cf. Vertovec, 2007). In the context of globalization, sociolinguists now characterize communities as heterogeneous, dynamic, and to a certain extent, transient. This is reflected in different contemporary approaches in sociolinguistics that address numerous issues about diversity, especially in the context of globalization. Migration has added more layers of social diversity to contemporary societies, especially in Western contexts, where the notions above were primarily developed.

This results in the concomitant interrogation of the nature of language as well. Approaching globalization compels us to acknowledge that “languages” should not be understood as fixed grammatical systems; they are always in contact with each other. The notion of “truncated repertoires” (Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck, 2005) views languages as a collection of ‘highly specific “bits” of language and literacy varieties’ (Blommaert, 2010; quotation marks in original) that implies that language must be seen not just as a closed grammatical system. This is similar to the notions of the “translingual” (Canagarajah, 2013) and “poly-lingual languaging” (Jørgensen, 2008), which deconstruct the idea that languages are ever “whole” and discretely distinct from one another—these concepts view language as inherent hybrids of different “languages.” Moreover, there is greater

recognition now that “language” should be analyzed in terms of multiple aspects, including multimodal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) and semiotic (Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Blommaert, 2010; 2013b) forms. In the context of globalization, these new views on language also affect the relationship between language and society. Pennycook and Otsuji’s (2014; cf. Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010) concept of “metrolingualism,” for instance, shifts the focus of analysis from language per se to the direct link between space and language, which stresses the active role of space in legitimizing specific linguistic repertoires, especially in urban spaces. These all support the idea that sociolinguists should pay close attention to how languages serve as “mobile resources” (Blommaert, 2010, p. 49; 2005; Canagarajah, 2013; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010), not only in terms of their composition—such as their nature—but also in terms of their movement in society (cf. Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010).

These sociolinguistic approaches suggest that language and society need to have a sensitivity to diversity. Studies using these concepts have examined how social variables such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc. have affected the definition of language and community. This thesis aims to contribute to this growing literature by focusing on how such forms of mobilities and diversities can be seen in the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore.

In his book, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*, Blommaert (2010) discusses the long history of the interface of sociolinguistics and diversity, and provides an account of how sociolinguistics has shifted its focus from distribution (i.e. how language is distributed among communities, which he



characterizes as premised on fixed notions of language and community) to mobility (i.e. how different forms of language move across sociolinguistic contexts, which he argues is premised on more dynamic and multi-layered notions of language and context). This focus on mobility can be seen in many studies on language and migration (see Canagarajah, 2017 for a good compilation of research on language and migration), which also serve as the theoretical inspiration of this thesis.

The following discussion of this section is divided into three parts, which are loosely based on the three foci of research about discourse and migration identified by De Fina and Baynham (2012): “*discourse on immigrants, discourse by immigrants, and institutional interactions involving immigrants*” (p. 2; italics in original). Since this thesis specifically talks about citizenship, which is just one part of immigrant discourse studies, it is necessary to tweak the three foci above to effectively provide an overview of the sociolinguistic studies on citizenship. The first part focuses on studies that examine the ideologies of language testing and citizenship procedures, which is the most explicit manifestation of the embeddedness of language in matters of citizenship. This can be seen as “institutional interactions involving immigrants.” While Singapore does not have a language test requirement for citizenship applicants, the lessons we can draw from the literature in this field are still important because they provide insights into how language and citizenship are tied together by the government. The second part continues the discussion by investigating how language plays a role in the formation of representations of citizenship and other immigration-related concepts. This runs parallel with “discourses on immigrants.” Finally, the third part, which is

closely related to “discourses by immigrants,” talks about the everyday sociolinguistic enactments of citizenship, where ethnographic studies about people’s everyday lives and how this reflects and enacts citizenship processes are paid attention to. This review highlights what has been done and what is yet to be done in the field of language and citizenship.

### 3.3.1. Ideologies of Language Testing and Citizenship Procedures

In this section, I discuss two areas of research on the ideologies of language testing and citizenship procedures: “official” language tests, which are about actual language tests that citizenship applicants must take; and “unofficial” language tests, which are not “tests” per se, such as encounters with citizenship regimes where interactions seem to be treated as “tests.”

#### *3.3.1.1. “Official” Language Tests*

One of the central research areas in sociolinguistics and citizenship studies is language and citizenship testing. There are many studies about language testing, several of which we discuss below, which mostly originate from or are based on liberal democracies. These studies tend to explore how citizenship and testing regimes of nation-states are operationalized based on their assumptions of what citizenship and language mean and how they relate to each other and to immigration in general.

Etzioni (2007) makes a good point when he claims that citizenship tests, including language and literacy requirements, tend to almost exclusively target immigrants, given that local-born citizens, irrespective of the *jus soli* or *jus sanguinis* citizenship frameworks that their countries follow, are not

subject to them. He further argues that “[c]itizenship tests, rather than establishing qualifications for citizenship, are instead very often used as a tool to control the level and composition of immigration...” given that they are mostly designed for immigrants and in accordance with the dynamic values that governments hold towards immigrants (p. 353). This suggests the need to examine the rationale behind implementing language and citizenship tests, what their repercussions are, and how they actually affect people who are required to take them. In their compilation *Discourses on Language and Integration: Critical Perspectives on Language Testing Regimes in Europe*, Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero, and Stevenson, (2009) raise a few important questions as a springboard for their critical assessment of “testing regimes.” They ask:

... is it appropriate to use linguistic proficiency in a particular language as a criterion for granting residence rights or citizenship? If so, what level of proficiency in which form(s) of which language(s) should be required, and how should this be tested? Should this requirement be imposed on all applicants or should certain categories be exempted, and if so, on what grounds? (p. 3).

The previous section briefly alluded to this in the introduction of Extra, Spotti, and Van Avermaet’s (2009) compilation which I briefly introduced in Section 3.2. This compilation provides a picture of how different European countries come up with different language testing policies based on specific ideologies of the individual countries, even though they are supposedly influenced by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

of the European Union. The choice to introduce the previous section with this compilation was intentional because it provides a good cross-cultural and international overview of how language testing regimes in Europe, which reflects not just how countries fall into the segregationist/assimilationist/multicultural diversity management frameworks but also how language is foregrounded in citizenship regimes. These studies tend to be critical of how (Western) nation-states continue to subscribe to the “one country, one people, one language” ideology that enshrines monolingualism as a prerequisite to the construction and preservation of national identity and conversely entails that linguistic diversity should be strictly controlled in order to not go against such a cogent national identity. Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) label this view as the “dogma of homogeneity,” which is the “...view of society in which differences are seen as dangerous and centrifugal and in which the ‘best’ society is suggested to be one without inter-group differences” (pp. 194-195; quotation marks in original).

The critical scholarship about language testing goes beyond this compilation and Europe, as seen in the body of work from different countries that require language tests from its citizenship applicants, such as Canada (e.g. Millar, 2013), United Kingdom (e.g. Cooke, 2009; Blackledge, 2009; Saville, 2009), Germany (e.g. Piller, 2001; Piller, 2002; Schüpbach, 2009), United States (e.g. Kunnan, 2009), Australia (e.g. McNamara & Ryan, 2011; Hawthorne, 1997), Sweden (e.g. Milani, 2008), and Netherlands and Belgium (e.g. Gysen, Kuijper, & Van Avermaet, 2009) and etc. These case studies are important because they show that despite the different social, economic, and

political backgrounds of countries, language tests tend to exhibit comparably problematic ideologies. As Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero, & Stevenson (2009) argue, analyses of language and citizenship, including those that focus on language testing, should consider the history of the local context where they take place. They further argue:

From this perspective, we are likely to discover that political activities are in fact inspired by ideological intentions in an attempt to defend the myth of the ‘nation’ as a stable monolingual norm which is constantly challenged by multilingual realities. This denial of societal multilingualism fuels discourses that ignore, or reject, the very real situations created by migration (p. 5; quotation marks in original).

Contrary to the studies from the social sciences about language and citizenship processes discussed in the previous section—which tend to look at language as a fixed social variable that can be managed to promote integration or to ensure political representation of people (e.g. Kymlicka, 1995)—the sociolinguistic studies on language testing and citizenship are mostly premised on a fine-grained understanding of language ideologies, which are the “...mediating link between social structures and forms of talk” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 55). This is an important difference: while the studies on diversity management from other fields of the social sciences use political or sociological frameworks as a lens to describe how language becomes relevant in the context of citizenship, texts on language and citizenship from sociolinguistics pay close attention to ideologies that directly come from or are related to language and how it mediates social relations as a vantage point in

understanding how this relates to citizenship. Hence, nuances of language tend to be more appreciated by these studies. Milani (2008) explicitly draws the link in his paper about debates on language testing in Sweden, which applies to the other studies above as well:

...the necessity of introducing a language test for naturalization are not simply about OBJECTIVE measurement or assessment of immigrants' language skills, but are the tangible manifestation of a COMPETING LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY – one could call it an IDEOLOGY OF LANGUAGE TESTING – that attempts to defy multilingualism and multiculturalism by tying proficiency in one language to knowledge of one culture as the compulsory prerequisite for the granting of rights of membership in Swedish society and the Swedish nation as an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) (p. 30; capitalization and citation in original).

In this extract, Milani (2008) goes against the idea that language tests are objective and that they should not cause pressing concerns if they are crafted and implemented correctly. He implies that the idea that language tests are objective is a pretense that masks many layers of ideologies that are tied with them, such as the denial of multilingualism and multiculturalism. While the study of the ideology of language testing is not unique to sociolinguistics, given that the studies from other fields of the social sciences discussed in the previous section also attempted to explore their ideological underpinnings and repercussions, the sociolinguistic perspective provides a better way of examining them because it is better informed of the complexity of defining

what (standard) language is, how it can be employed to achieve social goals, and how it links not just to diversity management policies but also to everyday politics of identity construction. Moreover, sociolinguistics reminds us that the social aspects of language are not just about what it can do to society but are part and parcel of “language” to begin with, and hence, should be continuously interrogated. As Heller (2001, p. 120) succinctly argues, “language is both a key domain of struggle over difference and inequality, and a means of conducting that struggle.” In other words, while most research on diversity management from other fields in the social sciences pay attention to how language serves as a means of conducting struggle, sociolinguistics adds the layer of language being a domain of struggle to it. Given that language tests are one of the most explicit manifestations of the inextricable connection of language with diversity management policies, it is then vital to adopt the sociolinguistic perspective in order to have a more comprehensive account of the ideologies of language tests.

We can identify a few key points from these studies. First, language is not a fixed social variable that cannot simply be objectively tested in a standardized test, and hence, is even more political than how the studies discussed in Section 3.2 portray it. Forms of language which are assessed by language tests need to be scrutinized because they tend to be selected based on notions of standardness or correctness. These studies argue that beliefs about monolithic cultures, homogeneous societies, and standard languages are problematic because they do not fully account for the nuances of how the politics of language testing manifests in everyday life.

Second, language testing tends to involve many ideologies simultaneously. For instance, using them to promote “integration” and “social harmony” usually comes with a covert promotion of exclusion and inclusion, as well as the reaffirmation of the question of what the immigrant should do more to be considered a “good” immigrant. By investigating language tests through the perspective of language ideologies, we can better approach the language-related issues and problems with diversity management policies that surface because of the deep-seated ideologies of language. As Weedon (1987, p. 21) argues, “...the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed.” Hence, it is important to look at language testing not just in terms of its potential effects (e.g. promoting social integration, minimizing diversity-driven conflict, ensuring political participation) but also in terms of what ideologies drove their construction, to begin with (cf. Shohamy, 2001; Shohamy, 2009; Blackledge, 2009; McNamara, 2009).

It is important to note that while these studies present insights that can shed light on language and citizenship in Singapore, they do not perfectly fit in the Singapore immigration setting because Singapore does not have a language testing requirement for citizenship applicants. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Singapore Constitution only mandates that citizenship applicants prove that they are proficient in one of the four official languages of Singapore, and this proficiency is not formally tested. Hence, the language proficiency requirement in Singapore is implemented in an informal way, which is not explicitly discussed by any governmental body. Even my off-the-



record interviews with the National Population and Talent Division of Singapore—the government body that takes charge of the integration of immigrants—failed to get clarifications about how this language proficiency is tested in Singapore. This does not mean to say that Singapore is able to completely evade the problems associated with language tests; as Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero, and Stevenson (2009, p. 3) discuss, the shift from informal language requirements (e.g. citizenship interviews in a specific language) to the implementation of formal language tests was seen as a corrective measure and can be construed as “...a necessary if belated formalisation of procedures that should introduce a greater degree of transparency and fairness into the process.” Moreover, this potentially contributes to the growing dissatisfaction of local-born Singaporeans with the citizenship policies in Singapore, who believe that citizenship requirements are too easy for new citizens and are just an “...additional hoop that potential citizens must jump through” (Lim, 2014, p. 204). This study aims to explore how the lack of a formal language testing requirement in Singapore affects the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore, because language continues to be construed as a major marker of social difference, yet it is not directly examined which can be viewed as incompatible with the rhetoric of meritocracy of the Singaporean government.

### *3.3.1.2. “Unofficial” Language Tests*

The principles that govern the implementation of language testing requirements for citizenship applications do not only take place in official language tests but are also mirrored by unofficial tests by different government institutions that screen not just citizenship applicants but people

who apply for different immigration statuses as well, such as refugees, asylum seekers, and other immigrants (RASIM<sup>13</sup>). This shows that the principles behind language tests can be so prevalent in different contexts that they manifest themselves in different forms, such as in unofficial “language tests” that target not just citizenship applicants but other types of migrants as well. This has been a focus of many sociolinguistic studies on citizenship, such as those that pay attention to how language is used in highly subjective ways of assessing whether a person can qualify for refugee or asylum status (e.g. Blommaert, 2001; Shohamy & McNamara, 2009; Maryns & Blommaert, 2001; Jacquemet, 2009; Eades, 2009; Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Kirkwood, McKinlay, & McVittie, 2013). While these studies do not directly apply to this study given that new citizens, the focus of this study, have already completed the citizenship application process, these studies nonetheless yielded findings that are relevant to this study.

A common observation made by these studies is that the lack of an official language test for RASIM does not mean that they are not subject to any form of linguistic requirement in order to get access to the country they want to enter or stay in; rather, they are informally and implicitly tested through other means, which are very much similar to formal language tests in terms of ideologies. This usually takes place during interactional routines throughout their application, such as interviews that seek to assess whether

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<sup>13</sup> This acronym comes from KhosraviNik, Krzyzanowski, & Wodak's (2012) corpus-based paper on the representations of RASIM in British press. They acknowledge that refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants have different political aspects, which means that these people may face different forms of struggles. My use of the RASIM acronym in this thesis is admittedly out of convenience.

applicants deserve to get refugee or asylum status. While these interviews are not officially designed to test for language skills since they are conducted in order to assess other matters such as the life experiences of RASIM, the fact that interviews are linguistically facilitated implies that life experiences are assessed in terms of how they are verbalized. Hence, interviews are assessed based on how applicants construct their interview narratives, such as how phonetic, syntactic, and paralinguistic shifts (e.g. Maryns & Blommaert, 2001; Eades, 2009) are treated as indexical markers of the identity of the applicant—which means that language styles are treated as a metric of how honest RASIM are and whether they deserve to be given access to the country. This implies that people who deviate from the narrative structures expected of them are generally treated as undeserving of RASIM status, which means that complexities of the sociolinguistic realities surrounding RASIM and their countries of origin tend to be erased during these interviews because the approval process tends to operate on a homogeneous notion of RASIM and dismiss people who do not fit their expectations.

This suggests a few important things. First, language is seen as the key indicator of identity and values, which is rather problematic because language is just one variable involved in the complex RASIM procedures which are supposed to assess people's life experiences. Second, testing regimes do not account for the asymmetrical distribution of linguistic resources among RASIM applicants. This reaffirms the inequality of the system, and more often than not, RASIM are assessed rather unfairly in terms of truth, trustworthiness, coherence consistency, etc. just because of the linguistic resources that they have. Third, it is not just linguistic features (e.g. phonetics, syntax) that are

assessed; their narratives have to be assessed too in terms of what they say and how they say it (e.g. Blommaert, 2001; Kirkwood, McKinlay, & McVittie, 2013; Jacquemet, 2009). These points show how strong the language ideologies behind RASIM applications are and how they are very comparable to the formal language tests discussed above, even though the “testing” in RASIM applications tends to happen in less conspicuous ways given that they are not formal requirements.

These studies on the ideologies of formal and informal language testing components in citizenship applications not only demonstrate the validity of certain sociolinguistic concepts but also reflect the key issues in the segregationism/assimilation/multiculturalism debate discussed in Section 3.2. They provide a glimpse of the different nuances involved in crafting and implementing diversity management policies and illustrate how the complex nature of language magnifies the said issues. These testing regimes simultaneously reflect the government’s ideologies on diversity management and language, and the intersection of those ideologies results in more issues that can potentially affect different groups of people, especially those who have to undergo through tests.

In addition to regimented RASIM applications, there are other forms of “unofficial language tests” which put people in a position where they have to grapple with issues of language and citizenship. One example of this is the ritual of citizenship ceremonies. Khan and Blackledge’s (2015; cf. Khan, 2019) ethnographic study of an immigrant who later on became a citizen in the UK is a good example of such research. They examined the citizenship ceremony, specifically, the recitation of the Oath/Affirmation of Allegiance, in

the United Kingdom. The citizenship ceremony is one of the final steps that citizenship applicants have to complete in order to become British citizens. Similar to RASIM applications, citizenship ceremonies are regimented and come with expected narrative forms, and citizenship applicants need to perform them in order to become citizens. They describe the process of reciting the Oath/Affirmation of Allegiance not just as an ideological process that promotes assimilationism, but also as another form of language testing—albeit a less technical one than the language tests discussed in the previous section. The fact that citizenship applicants are required to recite the Oath/Affirmation of Allegiance, and be seen as doing so, implies that there is a linguistic element involved because the Oath and Affirmation are in English. Even though citizenship applicants have already met all the requirements of the citizenship application process, “...a trial of language performance must be negotiated” (p. 85). This means that citizenship applicants need to echo the “authoritative discourse” of the Oath/Affirmation in order to prove that they have successfully become British.

The studies on unofficial language tests discussed above suggest that the power of the state is still very strong in terms of how it imposes requirements for citizenship applicants. Consequently, the studies above talk about how this usually puts people in a disenfranchised position because they have to consistently meet the demands of the state, even if it entails picking up or performing linguistic forms or varieties which they usually would not just to achieve their goals. This exemplifies how people grapple with the concrete relationship between language and citizenship as they live their lives. While the studies mentioned above effectively show how testing regimes can strip

off the agency of RASIM applicants, they do not explore whether such stripping of agency could still be contested or resisted by individuals, albeit in momentary, or even fleeting, interactional moments. Hence, it would be important to explore what happens within the cracks and gaps of these citizenship regimes. In other words, it is worth examining what people do as they live their lives while acknowledging their limited agency vis-à-vis citizenship regimes. This is not to say that people will be able to completely dismantle the structural requirements imposed on them; rather, this is a call for the interrogation of how people find spaces to make their situation better.

This also means that studies on language testing, both formal and informal, would not be enough to fully make sense of the role language plays in the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore. Studies on language and citizenship in informal aspects need to complement this perspective because the role of language in the construction of citizenship then seems to take place on a more banal than official level and may even go beyond encounters with citizenship regimes. It is also important to also examine how this banality can still be regulated by different segments of society. Moreover, as I have said earlier, Singapore does not have a language testing component (in relation to Section 3.3.1.1) and its government officially claims that citizenship applications are assessed based on “eligibility requirements” (in relation to Section 3.3.1.2). Hence, the discussion needs to proceed by examining how the notion of citizenship and citizenship categories are discursively constructed. This is the focus of the two following sections: how citizenship and immigrant groups are represented in public media, which illustrates how language ideologies that relate to citizenship do not just come

from the level of government policies, but also from other members of society; and how citizenship becomes an issue that people have to perform, live with, or call into being on an everyday matter, which demonstrates how citizenship-related issues affect the lives of those who have different citizenship statuses.

### 3.3.2. Representations of Citizenship and Citizenship Categories

The premise of the studies examined in the previous section is that language is a communicative tool that is linked to symbolic values. For instance, language tests aim to calibrate people's linguistic proficiency to determine whether they embody symbolic notions such as being integrated into the host society or being truthful and trustworthy of receiving refugee or asylum status. While the previous section looks at debates about language tests for naturalization, this section continues the discussion by looking at debates about the representation of the notions of citizenship and citizenship categories. The goal of this section is to shed light on dominant perspectives used in examining how citizenship and citizenship categories are discursively constructed, using language, in public media.

This section reviews sociolinguistic studies about the representation of citizenship categories in public media texts. A common denominator between the studies reviewed in this section is that these studies usually employ corpus linguistic methods to systematically analyze large collections of textual data or corpora and are usually complemented with analytical and interpretive tools from Critical Discourse Analysis. These representations are usually identified from public media texts, mostly newspaper articles, mostly because of their prominence in shaping public discourses but also because of the relative

convenience of collecting a large collection of articles given that they are easily accessible online. Corpus linguistics values large collection of texts because they represent a snapshot of reality that can be analyzed using relatively objective methods such as statistics (e.g. analysis of frequency count, keyness or log likelihood, collocations or word co-occurrence and associations). Complementing corpus linguistic methods with methods from (critical) discourse analysis can be useful in investigating how discursive representations are formed in large corpora can be productive because it allows researchers to interpret statistical data while incorporating relevant social theories that can result in a comprehensive understanding of the discourses at hand. Let us examine a few examples.

Because representations of public media texts have usually been considered negative (e.g. Van Dijk, 1988; Greenslade, 2005 cited in Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008), sociolinguists have been inspired to find out whether this is true, and if it is, what triggers this, and how this transpires discursively. This is parallel with a common view in sociolinguistics that discursive representations, whether positively or negatively skewed, are important because they reflect dominant discourses in society that may result in actual repercussions for the people who are related to what is being represented discursively.

Corpus-assisted discourse analytic studies have explored this premise in relation to migrant groups. In these studies, keywords<sup>14</sup> based on known

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<sup>14</sup> In corpus linguistics, “keywords” generally refer to words that occur frequently enough, as determined by specified parameters of the analyst, in a corpus or in comparison to a reference corpus. Scott (1999) claims that three types of keywords usually surface in corpora: “...proper nouns; keywords that



categories are used (e.g. “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” “immigrant,” “citizen,” etc.) to study how groups of people are talked about in the corpora. These ways of talking about groups of people are the backbone of “representations” that these studies explore. For instance, Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) examined how refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants (RASIM) are discursively constructed in UK newspaper articles. They found out that RASIM categories are usually represented in a negative way. They used eight major categories, informed by Critical Discourse Analysis, in categorizing words that collocate with RASIM: provenance/destination/transit, number, entry, economic problem, residence, return/repatriation, legality, and plight (p. 21). These collocates were generally used negatively; for instance, “number” collocates (we will see examples in Chapter 5) included words such as “flooding,” “pouring,” and “streaming,” which follow the RASIM ARE WATER metaphor, which portray RASIM in a negative light. Moreover, they also discussed how the RASIM categories are related to “nonsensical terms” such as “illegal refugee,” which are factually nonsensical based on the actual political meanings of RASIM categories yet continue to attach negative values to RASIM categories (p. 30). These findings are parallel with other studies on the discursive representations of migrants in public media texts, such as Blinder and Allen’s (2016) study on the relationship between the discursive construction of immigrants in British newspapers and public perceptions of

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human beings would recognize as key and are indicators of the ‘aboutness’ of a particular text; and finally, high-frequency words such as *because*, *shall*, or *already*, which may be indicators of style, rather than aboutness” (cited in Baker, 2004: p. 347; italics in original). In this thesis, I use keywords generally to refer to words which reflect the “aboutness” of the texts. I use “keywords” in a way that is less restricted to the statistical frequency of search words.

British society towards immigrants, and KhosraviNik's (2009; cf. KhosraviNik, Krzyzanowski, & Wodak, 2012) paper on how different micro-linguistic strategies (e.g. metaphors, foregrounding/backgrounding, use of quotation marks, exaggeration, etc.) relate to ideological macro-structures that perpetuate the negative construction of RASIM. What these findings suggest is that the language used in press articles has ideational power and not just a communicative one that I discussed in the previous section. In other words, press articles should be read critically because they do not merely communicate "factual" reports about RASIM but also ideologically represent them in the process.

In addition to these studies about groups of people based on their political categories, corpus linguistic studies about migration also talk about less direct ways of representing migrants and migration in general (see Busch & Krzyzanowski, 2012). Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2009) attempts to link language policy and discourse analysis by examining the lexical overlaps between public media texts about language policy texts and public media texts about immigration by using corpus linguistic methods. In this work, she did not directly look at keywords based on political categories; rather, she compared the keywords used in both sets of public media texts to find out whether discourses about language policy are essentially about immigration as well. In a similar vein, MacDonald, Hunter & O'Regan (2013) compare two corpora based on two issues closely related to immigration in the United Kingdom: the discourses of citizenship and community cohesion and the discourses about preventing violent extremism. Their goal was comparable to Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2009) because both studies aim to find out whether

issues usually tied to migration are reflected in media discourses. Gales (2009) has a more general focus when she investigates how diversity is represented in political discourses in the United States, which is an area of concern because it underpins US immigration laws. In the context of Singapore, Lee (2015) conducts a similar study of political discourses uses different metaphors in citizenship education to justify the government's "hegemonic leadership" (99). Similar studies such as Tan's (2014) and Lim's (2014), discussed in Chapter 2, also provide comparable discourse analyses of how the Singapore media represent permanent residents and new citizens, respectively.

These studies about the discursive representations of migrants provide a good glimpse of how language can be used ideationally and not just communicatively, and how public media discourses relate to the construction of citizenship. However, most of these studies tend to do little investigation of the actual material conditions that surround the public discourses. While these studies contextualize the data in terms of when and why it was collected, the analyses seem to be focused on identifying what the representations in texts are, and not on how the texts circulate and gain salience in society with respect to the material conditions that surround them. While identifying representations are important because they provide a picture of how the public talks about citizenship and migration, it is also important to link the representations to the actual people involved. For instance, questions of how these texts relate to people tend to be answered solely through the researchers' inference, instead of more concrete ways of assessing the uptake of the people concerned. Examining how these discourses are taken up by people and how people position themselves towards these discourses is important because it

would show whether the representations are really as potent as what the discourse analysis suggests, and also, whether there are ways to contest the representations. Hence, it is important to not just focus on the textual representations themselves, but also on people's uptake, to find out whether there are spaces for resistance and negotiation may exist despite the overwhelming negative representations towards migrants. This thesis aims to address this point.

In the following section, I talk about the third area of sociolinguistic research about citizenship: how citizenship can be seen as an everyday practice. These studies share some premises with everyday multiculturalism because they try to bridge the gap between discourses from the "top" (e.g. government and tests, media and representations) and the "bottom" (e.g. how people view discourses and texts). By looking at how public policies and discourses are reflected in or relate to individual narratives, these studies provide a reasonable way of looking at people's uptake, which is a step forward to the comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language and citizenship.

### 3.3.3. Language, Citizenship, and Everyday Practices

The previous sections provided a review of the key studies on sociolinguistics and citizenship from the perspective of official and unofficial discourses surrounding the individual. In this section, I review sociolinguistic texts that focus on the relationship between language and citizenship from the perspective of individual actors who construct, perform, or invoke citizenship in their lives. This would allow us to see how citizenship matters to the people

who actually make everyday decisions about their identities based on the notion of citizenship. These studies primarily stem from the long tradition of sociolinguistic approaches to diversity management, such as the approaches discussed in the introduction of Section 3.2. In this section, I focus on research that specifically focus on citizenship to establish the relevance of a sociolinguistic inquiry on the construction of citizenship. These studies revolve around two main topics: first, I the relationship between citizenship and narratives; and second, the investigation of instances when the notion of citizenship can be invoked to make claims.

#### *3.3.3.1. Citizenship and Narratives*

Narrative analysis is one common approach that sociolinguists use in studying discourses about immigrants, and similarly, citizenship. De Fina and Tseng (2017; see also, De Fina, 2003) provide a good survey of research that examine the role of narrative in migration, although most of these studies tend to look at issues of migration which are not directly linked to citizenship. They claim that these studies tend to revolve around two foci: “(1) research on identities and representations by and about migrants, and (2) research on migrants’ storytelling practices within institutions and communities” (p. 381). They argue that narrative can be useful in understanding migration because discourses about migration can be analyzed as narrative constructions, and those can reveal various ideologies. For instance, narratives can be helpful in investigating how migrants reflect on their linguistic experiences (De Fina and King, 2011). Narratives are closely related to identity, and hence, the studies surveyed by De Fina and Tseng (2017) usually look at identity construction

processes in relation to narratives (e.g. Barkhuizen, 2013; Clary-Lemon, 2010; De Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999; Golden & Lanza, 2013). This is usually conducted by examining the linguistic forms comprising narrative structures, and then situating them in the various contexts (e.g. immediate context such as the context of the interview, historical context such as background sociopolitical phenomena that affected someone's recollection of events, etc.).

Meinhof and Galasiński's (2005) book, *The Language of Belonging*, is a good example of a study that combines narrative and discourse analyses with ethnographic methods to investigate the role of language and migration in the identity construction of migrants. They focus on linguistic clusters—mostly lexical items—that their respondents use to construct their narratives, and claim that these clusters are usually conditioned by public media discourses (p. 52). This book repeatedly argues that there are many forms of context (e.g. spatial, temporal) that conditions people's lexical choices, and should, therefore, be scrutinized when making claims about how these lexical items facilitate identity construction. For instance, they discuss how the desire of people to construct a cohesive identity is sometimes disrupted by their recollection of political events and ideologies, which could result in tensions in identities. For instance, they argue that their Polish participants' experiences with communism and the history of the German Democratic Republic affected the linguistic choices that they used in their narratives, which reflects the tensions in the identities that the participants are trying to construct. This shows that narratives can serve as a window for the understanding of the relationship between language and migration.

Similar to the approach of everyday multiculturalism, studies about the everyday narratives about language and citizenship aim to find out how everyday experiences are latticed with larger issues of the political aspects of language and citizenship. The studies above provide a picture of how people's narratives reflect, challenge, or reconfigure the debates that happen at the "top" level of discourses, such as those that come from the government or public media texts. However, these studies do not specifically investigate how the "top" and "bottom" discourses relate to each other. While the analysis of the "bottom" discourses is important in understanding how language and citizenship become salient and palpable in people's everyday lives, it also needs to approach such narratives in the context of other public discourses. Moreover, these studies tend to look at citizenship as a preexisting category that can potentially influence the narratives of people, and not necessarily examine how citizenship is narratively constructed. This is a gap that has to be addressed because citizenship has become a concept-in-flux because of sociopolitical changes brought about by globalization which results in different articulations from different types of people. Hence, it is also important to see how everyday interactions and experiences not only reflect citizenship, but also produce it through a discursive construction.

#### *3.3.3.2. Constructing Citizenship in Everyday Interactions*

That citizenship can be discursively constructed is an idea that needs to be highlighted. In their compilation, *Analysing Citizenship Talk: Social positioning in political and legal decision-making processes*, Hausendorf and Bora (2006, p. 24) highlight this idea by examining procedural discussions

about policies concerning genetically modified organisms (GMO) in Europe. While GMO trial procedures seem to be a niche topic, the comments the authors made about citizenship transcend GMO trial procedures and apply to other forms of citizenship participation. By choosing the deliberations and discussions that happen during the administrative procedure about GMO trials, they were able to provide reasonable illustrations of how citizenship is constructed interactionally, and more importantly, on a banal and everyday level that may be different from official articulations of citizenship (such as in the studies discussed in the previous sections). They argue that “...citizenship goes beyond and differs from an inevitable outcome of civil rights and entitlements that the actors are supplied with. It should rather be considered as empirically constituted within the interactions between government and citizens.” Moreover, they claim that procedural interactions are important in understanding how forms of citizenship participation are constructed because ‘...[procedural interactions are] in which they [citizenship participation] are being indicated, presented, filled out, negotiated, changed, or in short: *communicated and thereby socially realized*. This is what the notion of “communicating citizenship” stands for’ (p. 24; quotation marks and italics in original).

The view that citizenship can be constructed not just politically by states but also discursively by different members of society is comparable to the premise of Milani’s (2017a) edited compilation *Language and Citizenship: Broadening the Agenda*. This compilation has three major aims, which are to:



1. Continue investigating institutional discourses about the relationship between nationality and citizenship, but relate them to more ethnographically grounded interactions;
2. Tease out the multiple and often conflicting meanings of citizenship; and
3. Explore the different linguistic/semiotic guises that citizenship might take on in different contexts (p. 3).

This compilation argues that citizenship may mean differently to members of society, which usually results in inconsistencies or tensions, and that these multiple meanings are differently realized in discourse.

This perspective is considerably different from the premise of studies mentioned in the previous sections, such as those on language testing regimes and representations of immigrant groups. These studies view citizenship not as a preexisting category where people fall into; rather, it is viewed as a category that people can invoke or perform for their own gains. This is an important difference because it shows how citizenship processes can also manifest themselves in grounded interactions that appear to not be about citizenship *per se* but could be.

Fairclough, Pardoe, and Szerszynski (2006) follow this premise in their own discussion of an organizational meeting about GMO. By focusing on a seemingly banal moment—the organizational meeting—they investigate how people navigate around different labels of citizenship to achieve the ends they hope for during the meeting. They think of citizenship as a communicative achievement—a product of communicative negotiation. They argue:

One way of reading this emphasis on citizenship as a communicative achievement is that it is an attempt to get us away from preconceptions about what citizenship *is*, and to force us to look at how it's *done* -- at the range of ways in which people position themselves and others as citizens in participatory events (p. 98; italics in original).

They extend the concept of “banal nationalism” (Billig, 1995), the idea that people can perform the abstract and complicated notion of nationalism in their everyday lives (e.g. hanging the flag or reciting the pledge), to “banal citizenship.” Furthermore, they argue that we need to view these “performances of citizenship” in relation to the “pre-constructed” social categories of citizenship around individuals, because such performances are “the product of a tension and negotiation between the power of the pre-constructed, and the power of situated agency” (101). In their study, they examined how the performance of citizenship contributes to the “communicative achievement of citizenship” (99), even though people did not explicitly utilize the notions of “citizen” or citizenship” as categories in strategically positioning themselves during the interaction.

The performativity of citizenship emphasizes the agency of individuals in the construction of the notion of citizenship. It acknowledges the complex interplay of the political, social, and individual aspects of citizenship. Moreover, it assumes that citizenship has become a concept that is always in contention in terms of its definition, and that it manifests itself in different forms. This follows the idea that citizenship may be analytically approached

not just in terms of its political category aspects but also in terms of how it can be communicatively achieved.

This premise is shared by Stroud's studies (2001; 2015; 2018) on "linguistic citizenship." He states that "linguistic citizenship" was developed from a "...need for a perspective that situated linguistic practices and representations of speakers firmly within their everyday sociopolitical strivings for agency and transformation" (2015, p. 22). This work is based on the notion of "acts of citizenship" developed by Isin (2009) and Isin and Nielsen (2008), which argue that the definition of citizenship should go beyond the traditional rights-and-obligations view and include how "new actors articulate claims for justice through new sites that involve multiple and overlapping scales of rights and obligations" (Isin, 2009, p. 370). Acts of citizenship are "deeds by which actors constitute themselves (and others) as subjects of rights" (Isin, 2009, p. 371; parentheses in original). They claim that such deeds may or may not be enacted by people who are politically categorized as "citizens;" rather, people may claim citizenship and make allegiances not just to a nation-state (which is what the traditional political definition of citizenship is), but also to other realms that involve rights and obligations, such as gender and environmental rights. For instance, Milani (2017b) talks about "sexual cityzenship" in the resistance movement that took place in Johannesburg Pride March in 2012—a move that was driven by how people claim citizenship of their gender and sexual identities in the landscape of the city. Stroud's notion of "linguistic citizenship" allows him to examine how people make claims about their language rights.

The argument that people can make claims about citizenship and discursively construct it as a concept assumes a palpable level of agency. As an analytical framework, these seem to be promising in terms of finding out how people invoke, perform, and construct citizenship in their everyday lives. This thesis was inspired by this view. However, this thesis has a different focus from the studies above: the thesis aims to examine the notion of citizenship per se and what people do in relation to it. The political aspects of citizenship continue to take a central position in the everyday lives of people, such as the case of new citizens which this thesis is focused on. Moreover, while the expansion of the definition of citizenship is indeed warranted in the cases examined by the studies above, the political, and “traditional,” aspects of citizenship as status remain a very salient issue to some people, such as the new citizens included in this study, who all have firsthand experience in dealing with citizenship regimes in Singapore. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, Singapore public media texts about citizenship tend to still revolve around the legal or political aspects and implications of citizenship as status. Hence, this thesis takes a slightly different approach: it examines how the notion of citizenship is constructed through sociolinguistic means. It is for this reason that this study aims to investigate how the notion of citizenship is constructed by different members of Singapore society, and how such constructions relate to one another.

This thesis is inspired by the view espoused by the studies above: there should be clear attempts to find out what drives people to construct citizenship in the ways they do. For instance, people may reconfigure public discourses around them as they craft their own articulations of citizenship. Their

articulations may even relate to how people claim to feel or experience about “language” and “citizenship.” This shows the need to view language and citizenship not in purely linguistic terms, but in semiotic terms as well. Milani (2017a) provides a good rationale for this:

...discourse-based research on citizenship cannot be confined to the purely linguistic (see also van Zoonen et al. 2010). Without a serious engagement with the *visual*, the *corporeal*, and the *affective*, it is difficult to effectively unpack the dynamics of citizenship in contemporary late-modern conditions. In my view, it is in the mapping of the *social life of affect* (Ahmed 2004), and how it manifests semiotically. That there is the promise of better understanding – and maybe changing – social structures and practices... Perhaps it is in the direction of the *affective* that we should be heading (p. 12; italics and citations in original).

The move towards the semiotic investigation of the visual, the corporeal, and the affective aspects of citizenship necessitates approaches that go beyond the ideologies behind language planning and policy (such as in the case of language testing), textual or corpus analyses (such as in the case of the discursive construction of citizenship and citizenship categories), and analysis of narrative units (such as the analysis of life stories). To have a comprehensive view of how citizenship is constructed, a combination of these methods would be vital. Moreover, it is important to zoom into the semiotic processes that occur in the construction of citizenship, such as how meaning-making takes place across different forms of discourses. To understand how

these discursive and semiotic processes relate to the notion of citizenship, this thesis proposes a metapragmatic approach to citizenship, which I discuss in the following section.

### **3.4. A Metapragmatic Approach to Citizenship**

To be able to effectively investigate the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore, it is essential to approach different discourses about citizenship from the perspective of different stakeholders in Singapore society. This approach must be able explain how different resources construct the notion of citizenship and have sensitivity to the uptake of people on the said discourses. In this section, I demonstrate how a metapragmatic approach can effectively respond to these concerns. To do so, I first define what I mean by a “metapragmatic approach” and explain how this can help us answer the research questions of this thesis. Secondly, I talk about two metapragmatic concepts that I use in this thesis: fields of indexicality and metasign. Finally, I discuss the relationship of metapragmatics to accounts of affect and lived experiences, which are a significant part of the data that I use in this thesis.

#### **3.4.1. The Metapragmatic Approach**

The definition of metapragmatics I use in this thesis comes from Silverstein (1993), who defines metapragmatics as a process of meaning-making based on signs that refer to the “pragmatic” dimension of language. Silverstein characterizes the pragmatic dimension of language as the dimension of indexicality—a semiotic term that is used to refer to a contiguous (or pointing) relationship of sign and object. Metapragmatics

regards signs as coming from a “PRESUPPOSED CONTEXT” that may have “ENTAILED CONSEQUENCES” (Silverstein, 1993, pp. 41-42; capitalization in original). In other words, signs come from somewhere (“presupposed context”), and when they are used to point towards something that the sign supposedly represents (“indexicality”), they can generate an effect (“entailed consequences”) which could be identified and analyzed. Urban (2006) summarizes this definition by characterizing metapragmatics as the approach to signs that refer to “...the pragmatic code, about how to interpret the extrasemantic meanings encoded in speech” (p. 90). Hence, we can view metapragmatic activity as an indexical activity (“pragmatic”) that refers to the interpretation of extrasemantic meanings that are encoded in speech (“pragmatic code”).

To clarify this definition, let us provide an example of how we can identify extrasemantic meanings that are encoded in the pragmatic code, and there may be many “pragmatic codes” that we can draw similar extrasemantic meanings from. For instance, I want to present myself as a Filipino citizen. I may explicitly tell people “I am Filipino.” I may also not say this explicitly, but I can just use “we” when talking about Filipino people. I may also do this by speaking with a Filipino accent. I can also show people my passport. In this case, we can see that many signs may index one thing: my Filipino citizenship. We are able to generate extrasemantic meanings that were encoded in my pragmatic code—in this case, my linguistic and non-linguistic behavior. We can identify an indexical relationship between the things I say or do and my Filipino citizenship. The signs work because they come from a presupposed context that may have entailed effects. My definition of citizenship may be

different from someone else's, but assuming we share the same presupposed context, we may both coherently understand these signs as indexes of "citizenship." Hence, we can consider this an example of a metapragmatic activity.

This leads us to a question: how is metapragmatics a good framework for the study of the discursive construction of citizenship? The focus on signification and indexicality presents a good way for us to approach how people's use of different indexical signs can facilitate their construction of their version of citizenship. In this thesis, I aim to explore how citizenship is discursively constructed in different discourses in Singapore: specifically, in public media texts and in the interview narratives of new citizens. Metapragmatic features can be identified from these discourses: for instance, public media texts may signify citizenship through adjectives, while new citizens may signify citizenship by talking about it as an integral part of their lives. The metapragmatic approach can help us investigate how these signs are produced, how they relate to each other, and how they relate to the notion of citizenship. Even though people may have different conceptualizations of citizenship, we can somehow understand certain things as "about citizenship" because of our familiarity with what citizenship is or can be, and what signs can be used to signify it. Hence, indexical relationships can establish some level of coherence that allows us to understand certain signs as indexes of citizenship. Hence, in this thesis, I examine "participants' talk about talk, or their reflections, signals, and presuppositions about linguistic forms and their use" (Gal, 2016, p. 116).



To understand how the metapragmatic features in my data serve as signs of citizenship, I use two closely related metapragmatic concepts, fields of indexicality and metasign, which I discuss below.

### 3.4.2. Fields of Indexicality and Metasign

In this thesis, I follow Jaffe's (2016) notion of "field of indexicality"<sup>15</sup>, which she defines as what "...maps the linguistic and semiotic variables associated with a particular social object... [that an object can be]... indexed by an array of signs that include consumables of various kinds, practices, places, political causes, values, attitudes, and a variety of social and epistemic stances" (p. 95). Jaffe demonstrates this concept by talking about "Whiteness." In her study, Jaffe maps how the concept of Whiteness is indexed by an array of signs, such as practices, values, places, objects, and etc. in a blog that explicitly talks about Whiteness, "Stuff White People Like." She argues that while signs can construct different forms of Whiteness (e.g. un/reflexive middle class Whiteness, upper middle class Whiteness, working class Whiteness), the explicit framing of the blog as a blog about Whiteness encompasses these other forms of Whiteness as part of an idealized notion of "Whiteness."

The notion of fields of indexicality seems to be ideal for the analytical and interpretive inquiry that this thesis takes. Following this notion, we can view the notion of citizenship as a social object that is constructed, through indexicality, by different signs, such as lexical associations in public media

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<sup>15</sup> This concept is based on the combination of Eckert's (2008) notion of "indexical fields" and Silverstein's (2003) "orders of indexicality." For more details on the genealogy of "fields of indexicality," see Jaffe (2016).

texts, metapragmatic comments on languages, and structures and topics of narratives that position the self as a particular persona in interview narratives. This could help us understand how the object—citizenship—is constructed through the relationship of indexical signs, the positionalities and relationships they create, and the clusters that they form. Similar to Jaffe’s data, the data in this thesis are framed as about citizenship: for instance, the new citizens who participated in this study were made aware that they were being interviewed about citizenship because they are new citizens (to be discussed in Chapter 4), which frames the interview as about citizenship—similar to how the “Stuff White People Like” blog framed the signs in Jaffe’s paper. While she acknowledges that not all fields of indexicality may be understood as “coherent” because coherence is something that may not be presupposed all the time, the reflexive framing of the blog as about Whiteness establishes the field of indexicality of Whiteness it creates as “coherent.” The same can be said about citizenship: as the discussions in Chapters 2 and 3 suggests, “citizenship” is a term that is not devoid of misunderstandings and disputes. However, in this thesis, the data functions in a way comparable to “Stuff White People Like”: there is a sense of presupposed coherence that the fields of indexicality of citizenship in the data are about citizenship because of the reflexive framing of the interview as an interview about citizenship.

The construction of fields of indexicality is made possible by the nature of indexical signs: while we may have a collection of different indexes, they may be read as signs that refer to the same object: indexical signs may relate to each other based on the similarity of their contiguity to their objects. If they are deemed similar enough in terms of contiguity, they can be

“typified” (Agha, 2007), or “regimented” (Silverstein, 1993; Gal, 2016), as part of the same “semiotic range” (Agha, 2007) of a higher-level sign: a metasign. In this thesis, I find two particular definitions of metasign useful—Gal’s (2016) and Agha’s (2007) very similar definitions. Gal (2016) defines metasigns as:

A metasign is one that regiments how it itself and other signs are to be interpreted; it is a framing. Language ideologies in all their more-and-less explicit forms do just this work. Among all the many possible effects of metasignaling, [...] the achievement of similarity and difference – between linguistic forms, speaker personae, social roles, situations, objects of talk. Similarity and difference are like two sides of a coin; they result from mutually implicated sociolinguistic processes (p. 114).

Agha (2007) crystallizes this definition:

The typification is a **metasign**, a sign typifying others, which motivates a likeness among objects within its semiotic range [...]. Diverse objects are now signs of a particular type of conduct. They are **object-signs** with respect to the metasign that groups them together as signs of the same type of conduct (p. 22; boldface in original)

Following these definitions, we can infer that “Whiteness” in Jaffe’s study can be seen as a metasign: it subsumes and typifies different object-signs (e.g. liking coffee, black friends, multilingual children) that could potentially index Whiteness as about Whiteness (i.e. itself) because of the blog’s explicit

framing that it is about Whiteness (i.e. framing). Hence, the metasign of Whiteness “regiments” (Gal, 2016) object-signs as signs that refer to itself, and because of this, it regiments itself as well.

This thesis uses the notion of fields of indexicality and metasigns to understand the discursive construction of citizenship. A recurring point that will be illustrated in the thesis is that citizenship is a metasign: it typifies object-signs (e.g. “passports” in Chapter 6, metapragmatic comments and multimodal performances in Chapter 7) as part of its field of indexicality because of the explicit framing of the interview as about citizenship, and in some cases, because of the explicit framing of myself or my participants that the conversation was about citizenship (e.g. when I asked my participants to characterize a “good new citizen”). By following this view, we can understand how different object signs cluster together discursively and construct “citizenship” in the interview narratives. This is important because it allows us to see *a* way of constructing the notion of citizenship in Singapore. While the thesis does not claim that this is *the* only way of understanding how citizenship is constructed in Singapore, it gives us an account of how it could be constructed.

At this point, there is one issue which I think “field of indexicality” and “metasign” do not fully address: who creates indexicalities? The definitions of “metasign” tend to imply that metasigns get a life of their own and facilitates typifications or regimentations on its own. In this thesis, I emphasize that people make indexicalities. As Jaffe (2016, p. 88) argues, semiosis is socially and situationally situated. Hence, this thesis aims to explore how people make sense of and use potential object signs which may

be typified as part of the metasign. I do this by looking at how signs were used in my participants' accounts of their lived experiences and emotions. Let us explore this more in the following section.

### 3.4.3. Affect and Lived Experiences

So far, my discussion in this section has revolved around the theorization of signs and how they serve as a framework for the understanding of the discursive construction of citizenship. At this point, I must note that the signs and the signification process I discuss in this study are actual discourses produced by actual people who make sense of signs around them. As this study aims to also understand people's uptake of such discourses, I approach citizenship with an analysis of people's accounts of their affect and lived experiences as new citizens.

The term "affect" is not devoid of contestations<sup>16</sup>. Because what is now referred to as "affect" in the social sciences comes from different disciplines, affect is usually contrasted to other terms, such as feeling, sentiment, emotions. For instance, while Sedgwick (2003) claims that affects are the foundations of emotions, Lutz and White (1986) view affect as the product of the interweaving of emotions (cited in McElhinny, 2010). This terminological debate is not just a lexical matter: it reflects and reinforces greater epistemological differences. For instance, Wetherell (2013) talks about how disagreements between how affect is defined and methodologically approached—it "being contrasted with the discursive and the cognitive, and

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<sup>16</sup> See Wetherell (2015) and McElhinny (2010) for a comprehensive discussion of this terminological debate. For an excellent discussion of language and affect, see Besnier (1990).

distinguished from ‘domesticated’ emotion” (p. 349; quotation marks in original)—results in unproductive research “impasse” (p. 354) between affect and discourse studies. Because of this, instead of trying to resolve the terminological debate in this section, I heed Ahmed’s (2004) call to focus not on what emotion is, but what emotions do. I do not distinguish between these terms because the terminological debate is not relevant to the argument I make: that is, accounts of affect and experiences help us understand how people make sense of indexicalities around them. In this thesis, I generally use “emotions” and “affect” interchangeably to refer to how people felt about things about around them. They could be evaluations of things based on how it relates to them (e.g. “That is infuriating”) or explicit claims about how they felt (e.g. “I was sad at that time”). In this thesis, I focus on accounts of emotions—i.e. how people claimed they had felt—during the interviews. I do not make claims whether those feelings are “real” or whether there are physiological impulses that drive them. Rather, I pay attention to what accounts of emotions do—how they influence my participants’ interview narratives and how they influence my participants position themselves during their interviews (cf. Besnier, 1990).

In addition to accounts of affect (i.e. claims about how they felt), I also investigate how accounts of lived experience (i.e. claims about what they experienced in the past). Johnstone and Kiesling’s (2008) explains the relevance of lived experiences in semiosis:

It is people's lived experiences that create indexicality. Since every speaker has a different history of experience with pairings of context and form, speakers may have many different

senses of the potential indexical meanings of particular forms.

Indexical relations are forged in individuals' phenomenal experience of their particular sociolinguistic worlds (p. 29).

I believe that accounts of affect and accounts of lived experiences go hand in hand: they both help us understand why and how people use signs. This becomes clear in my discussion in Chapter 6, where I demonstrate how interwoven accounts of emotions (e.g. statements such as “the things I did for love”) and accounts of lived experiences (e.g. narratives about making a long-term relationship work) are. By acknowledging this, I paint a picture of how affect and lived experiences relate to the discursive construction of citizenship. I discuss this by explaining how articulations of citizenship involve accounts of what emotions people felt, and how the affective aspects of their articulations of citizenship help us understand how they use signs to talk about citizenship and how they use indexical signs to present themselves as new citizens. This logic also manifests in Chapter 7, albeit with greater emphasis on accounts of lived experiences, where I discuss how new citizens present themselves as good new citizens through their accounts of experiences with negotiating difference.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

This chapter sought to review strands of sociolinguistic research on citizenship. I began this chapter by providing a brief review of diversity management frameworks—segregationism, assimilation, and multiculturalism—from the social sciences that tend to undergird many sociolinguistic studies on citizenship. I concluded the review of these

frameworks by discussing everyday multiculturalism, which is an approach that understands how multiculturalism is enacted in everyday life. This framework is compatible with many sociolinguistic studies on citizenship.

The literature on language testing and citizenship procedure provide us with perspectives in understanding the relationship between people's lives and citizenship regimes. They show us how tests come to represent statal ideologies on citizenship. While this thesis draws inspiration from these texts, such as the value of looking at language not just communicatively but ideologically and the need to interrogate statal narratives such as multilingualism and multiculturalism, it also departs from them due to a difference in focus: Singapore does not require its citizenship applicants to pass citizenship and language tests, and new citizens have already completed the citizenship application process. Hence, it would be productive to explore whether the ideologies that govern official and unofficial language tests manifests themselves in the narratives of new citizens.

I also reviewed studies that explore how citizenship and citizenship categories are represented in public media texts. These studies provide a good description of the discursive resources that facilitate the construction of such representations and a reasonable take on their potential implications. However, I showed that they tend to not incorporate the perspective of the people the representations are supposedly about. This is a gap that this thesis aims to address—this thesis aims to explore discursive representations of citizenship and citizenship categories and examine how new citizens talk about the notion of citizenship and their status as new citizens. This would shed new insights



into how these discourses connect, which would have implications for our understanding of citizenship.

I concluded the chapter by proposing the metapragmatic approach as a framework for the analysis of the discursive construction of citizenship. The metapragmatic approach allows us to understand how various resources serve as indexical signs of citizenship. It can allow us to understand how signs work—they may be drawn from different presuppositions, they may relate to each other, and they may be reconfigured by people who use them. Hence, the metapragmatic approach presents a framework for understanding people's positioning towards discourses around them. It is an approach that enables us to effectively understand the meaning-making process while acknowledging the role that people's uptake plays in this process.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides a discussion of the methodology used in this study. It is divided into four main parts. The first part discusses the research paradigm that I use in this study: the interpretive approach. This uses methods from other approaches, such as linguistic ethnography, corpus linguistics, and discourse analysis. I also provide an overview of my fieldwork in this section. The second part describes the public media texts dataset: how I collected it and how I analyze it. The third part introduces my participants and describes my interview data. In this section, I also explain my procedure for analyzing interviews and provide an overview of the migratory backgrounds of my participants. I conclude this section by providing a brief note on writing and representation.

#### **4.2. An Interpretive Approach**

This thesis uses an interpretive approach to analyze the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore. Erickson (1985) uses the term “interpretive” to refer to a collection of approaches that are oriented towards participant observation research. His rationale for using this term stems from three reasons. First, he claims that it is “more inclusive” than other terms, such as “ethnography” or “case study.” Second, he states that it “avoids the connotation of defining these approaches as nonquantitative,” which the term “qualitative” does. Finally, he considers “interpretive” as a term that effectively captures the “central research interest in human meaning in social

life and in its elucidation and exposition by the researcher” (p. 2). I decided to adopt this approach because it captures the various methods that I used to answer my research questions, which are:

1. How is the notion of citizenship discursively constructed in Singapore?
2. How do new citizens negotiate their positions as new citizens of Singapore?
3. How does the new citizen perspective contribute to our understanding of how dominant discourses on citizenship are circulated and reproduced in Singapore?

How can we characterize the interpretive approach, and more importantly, how can this help us answer the research questions of this thesis? Erickson (1985) describes the interpretive approach as a method that involves “being unusually thorough and reflective in noticing and describing everyday events in the field setting and in attempting to identify the significance of actions in the events from the various points of view of the actors themselves” (p. 6). This is compatible with this thesis because the key to answering the research questions is a “thorough and reflective” account of the different discourses about citizenship in Singapore and their significance to our understanding of the notion of citizenship from the perspectives of different members of Singapore society. Furthermore, the interpretive approach allows me to appreciate the (1) “invisibility of everyday life” while (2) coming up with a systematic analysis of everyday practice. The interpretive approach also gives me space to (3) understand the “local meanings” of citizenship for people who feel the impact of citizenship on their everyday lives and to (4)

draw a “...comparative understanding of different social settings,” and even (5) beyond the local setting (adopted from Erickson, 1985, pp. 8-11).

This thesis uses approaches from linguistic ethnography, corpus linguistics, and discourse analysis. These approaches are compatible with the interpretive approach: they involve a thorough and reflective accounting of the linguistic phenomena I was trying to understand, which can be seen in different discourses, and take into account the perspectives of the actors involved in the activity. While the thesis is generally based on qualitative data, some parts of it were aided by a certain level of quantification through the help of corpus linguistics software. We discuss these approaches in the following sections.

#### **4.3. Fieldwork: Informed by Linguistic Ethnography**

This thesis uses methods from contemporary linguistic ethnography (e.g. Rampton, 2007; Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2014; Blommaert & Dong, 2010), a field which is generally premised on the studies of Dell Hymes (see Rampton, 2007 for a comprehensive overview of the development of UK linguistic ethnography). As the proponent of the ethnography of communication, Hymes revolutionized the connection between linguistics and ethnography by providing a nuanced approach to language and context. Hymes (1974) believes that “it is not linguistics, but ethnography, not language, but communication, which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be assessed (p. 4). Blommaert and Dong (2010) argue that it is Hymes’ emphasis on the “viewpoint of man” (Hymes, 1964: p. xiii) that provides a good research

perspective; they claim that “language is approached as something that has a certain relevance to man, and man in anthropology is seen as a creature whose existence is narrowly linked, conditioned, or determined by society, community, the group, the culture” (p. 6).

Linguistic ethnography played an important role in how I conducted my fieldwork and analyzed my data. It helped develop my sensitivity to the topic of this thesis. This sensitivity influenced the interpretive and analytical direction of the thesis: my findings were guided by my ethnographic knowledge of citizenship in Singapore. Moreover, its openness to and compatibility with other linguistic and ethnographic epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies helped me account for various forms of discourses about citizenship.

#### 4.3.1. Reasons for Incorporating Ethnographic Methods

My decision to use ethnographic methods was driven by many reasons. The first comes from the gap in the literature that I identified in the previous chapters. For instance, in Chapter 3, I reviewed scholarly texts about the representations of citizenship and citizenship categories in public media texts that tend to neglect the uptake of the people the discourses are supposedly about and treat texts as decontextualized objects of inquiry. The literature made me realize that a linguistic ethnographic approach could optimally answer the research questions I had. I wanted to investigate how public media texts contribute to the understanding of citizenship in Singapore. I also wanted to find out how people who experience issues about citizenship on an everyday basis understand citizenship. I wanted to find out whether these two

are connected to each other. While the focus of this thesis has been repeatedly changed or tweaked during the research process, one concern remained constant: I wanted to understand how different representations of citizenship from different members of Singapore society contributes to how the notion of citizenship is discussed and understood in Singapore. It is an understanding driven by a desire to understand not just what citizenship does to people, but what people do with citizenship as well, and how these are mediated by language. It is the need for this sensitivity to how discursive patterns operate in context and how they can potentially create spaces for people's uptake that renders linguistic ethnography a useful perspective in conducting this study.

The second reason stems from my own experiences as a researcher of citizenship in Singapore. As a foreign student in Singapore, I came across the topic of this study through a "structured accident...a coincidence conditioned by my social position" (Blommaert, 2005: 107). As I discussed in Chapter 1, my own personal experiences as a foreigner in Singapore contributed to my interest in this topic. I knew that I had a unique position as a foreigner who happened to do research about citizenship in Singapore and I could not deny the impact of my own background on how this research was eventually carried out. For instance, the topics I explored in the interviews may have been influenced by my background as a foreigner. I needed an approach that would not dismiss my own positionality in the production of this thesis; the necessary approach is one that understands that my own personal position is integral to the research process. Instead of denying my role in the field, I had to capitalize on it. This is consistent with Hymes' (1996) view:

All this is not to say that ethnography is open-minded to the extent of being empty-minded, that ignorance and naiveté are wanted. The more the ethnographer knows on entering the field, the better the result is likely to be. Training for ethnography is only partly a matter of training for getting information and getting along. It is also a matter of providing a systematic knowledge of what is known so far about the subject (p. 7).

Moreover, ethnography was important to me not just as a researcher, but as a person who tries to understand citizenship in Singapore. As Crapanzano (1977) argues, "...the "movement" of fieldwork can be seen as a movement of self-dissolution and reconstitution. The ethnographer, in learning the ways of the other – the alien other – learns to take on their standpoint; and this leads inevitably to a new view on, if not a new sense of, self" (p. 70). It gives me space to understand the topic at hand both on academic and personal levels. To quote Hymes (1996), "our ability to learn ethnographically is an extension of what every human being must do, that is, learn the meanings, norms, patterns of a way of life" (p. 13).

Now that I have established why I adopted an ethnographic orientation to my fieldwork and my interpretation process, I now discuss the fieldwork I conducted.

#### 4.3.2. The Fieldwork

This study is based on a fieldwork that I started in January 2015 and completed in April 2016. During the fieldwork, I familiarized myself even

more with the different discursive instantiations of citizenship in Singapore. I read the news daily, followed Singapore immigration policies and debates closely, watched Singapore TV shows, read and participated in online forums, and maintained good relationships with people from different citizenship statuses to be familiar with how people from different citizenship statuses encounter the notion of citizenship in their everyday lives.

The data that I use in this study are divided into two sets. The first is the public media texts dataset, which consists of newspaper articles and speeches of Singapore government officials. Newspapers provide a snapshot of the Singapore discursive space because they cover not only immigration and citizenship policies but also stories about new citizens. Studies mentioned in Chapter 3.3.2 make a good case for using newspapers as a representative of public discourses in a given setting. More details about how I collected the public media texts dataset can be found in Section 4.4 below.

The second is the interview data. My decision to conduct audio-recorded interviews was based on my desire to understand how people make sense of their backgrounds as new citizens, their position in Singapore society, and the dominant discourses on citizenship around them. While I paid attention to their articulations, I also compared them to how I, as a researcher, perceived the interactional activity. In Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte's (1999) words, I wanted to "...capture in participants' own words what they see, believe, and report doing with respect to a specific topic" (p. 146). Because of this, I interviewed 18 new citizens. The only restriction that I set is that the new citizens should have had received their Singaporean citizenship in



the past ten years. More details about the interview process and who my participants are can be found in Section 4.5 below.

These sets of data were complemented by my field notes and diary, where I was able to record some observational data—which are data based on my observations of what happened during the fieldwork that were not included in the audio recordings. Fieldnotes<sup>17</sup> are important because some social processes may not be captured by audio recording alone. I also kept a field diary to track the development of my own thoughts throughout the research process. They helped me chronicle my journey as an ethnographer and reminded me of what happened during my fieldwork which aided me with the interpretation of the data. For instance, during the writing process, I referred back to my notes, in addition to listening to the recordings again, to re-familiarize myself with what had happened during the fieldwork. While they were admittedly partial accounts, and in some cases rather personal, they helped me maintain my reflexivity as a researcher.

Prior to the fieldwork, I sought the approval of the National University of Singapore Institutional Review Board (NUS-IRB) to conduct fieldwork in Singapore. My correspondences with the NUS-IRB during the planning of my fieldwork provided me with good feedback on how to ethically conduct my fieldwork and ensured that my research methods did not subject my participants to risk, danger, or unnecessary discomfort. In line with the NUS-IRB guidelines, I anonymized my participants in this thesis. I gave my participants pseudonyms and I blurred out their faces in some pictures that I

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<sup>17</sup> See Sanjek (1990) and Madden (2010) for a comprehensive explanation of the role of fieldnotes in ethnographic research.

used in this thesis. Given that immigration narratives and life stories contain private and potentially sensitive topics, anonymizing my participants ensures that their participation in this research would not have any foreseeable backlash on their lives. I also followed the NUS-IRB's recommendations on storing and protecting my data in order to safeguard the identities of my participants.

#### **4.4. Public Media Texts: Informed by Corpus Linguistics**

To develop an understanding of how citizenship is generally talked about in Singapore public media texts, I had to come up with a large collection of such texts that could be systematically approached using linguistic methods. Being sensitized to these public media texts paves the way for the analysis of the uptake of my participants. Getting a sense of what public media texts about citizenship are like necessitates a systematic approach that could give me a general snapshot of public discourses in Singapore. Because of this, I decided to include a “corpus-assisted” (Partington, 2006) analysis, succinctly characterized by Baker (2010) as a type of analysis that utilizes “...a corpus as data in order to carry out linguistic analysis but can also involve other forms of data or analysis occurring simultaneously (e.g. interviews, or etymological or historical research)” (p. 8; parentheses in original).

Corpus linguistics focuses on linguistic performance (instead of competence), linguistic description (instead of linguistic universals), quantitative, but also qualitative, methods of analysis, and an empiricist (instead of a rationalist) paradigm (Leech, 1992), which is consistent with the principles of sociolinguistics. Because corpora, massive representative

linguistic samples of a specific kind of naturally occurring language, are “...designed or required for a particular ‘representative’ function” (Leech, 1991: 11; cf. Baker, 2006: 2), they could provide a good overview of how citizenship is generally talked about in Singapore public media texts. It has become a reliable tool not just for lexicographers, forensic linguists, descriptive linguists, but also sociolinguists and (critical) discourse analysts<sup>18</sup>. In Chapter 3, I discussed studies that employed corpus linguistics methods in the analysis of citizenship categories across different discursive spaces. Because of the viability of corpus linguistics in accounting for Singapore public media texts and its general compatibility with the interpretive approach and with the other methods I used—linguistic ethnography and discourse analysis—I believed that a corpus-assisted analysis of public media texts could effectively set the scene for my inquiry on how citizenship is discursively constructed in Singapore. In the following sections, I explain how I built my own corpus and how I prepared my corpus for analysis.

#### 4.4.1. Designing and Collecting the Corpus

The corpus used in this study came from three different sources: newspapers, speeches of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and press releases from the Prime Minister’s Office. These sources were selected based on their relevance to public discussions and policy. Because these sources came from different archives, the method of collecting them varied. These are discussed below.

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<sup>18</sup> Baker’s (2010) *Sociolinguistics and Corpus Linguistics* provides a comprehensive account of the synergy between the two strands of linguistics. See also Mautner (2016) for a good summary of the intersection of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis.

#### *4.4.1.1. Newspaper Corpus*

The newspaper corpus (NEWSCORP) was generated from Dow Jones Factiva, a “global news database of nearly 33,000 premium sources, including licensed publications, influential websites, blogs, images and videos” (Dow Jones, n.d.). Factiva is one of the most common and reliable sources of corpora of newspapers and other online materials which are used in corpus linguistic studies<sup>19</sup>. I selected four of the main English newspapers in Singapore as sources: The Straits Times (Singapore’s leading newspaper), TODAY, Channel NewsAsia<sup>20</sup>, and The New Paper (a tabloid). English newspapers for several reasons. First, English newspapers have the widest circulation in Singapore. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017 revealed that The Straits Times, Channel NewsAsia, The New Paper, and TODAY significantly outrank newspapers in other languages in terms of circulation, and even CNN and BBC News (Goh, 2017). Second, English newspapers tend to not be linguistically restricted to any particular racial group in Singapore (as compared to Chinese, Malay, or Tamil newspapers) since it is the official language that is learned by all racial groups. This implies that the readership of English newspapers caters to the general public more than newspapers published in other languages. Finally, I am personally constrained by my linguistic repertoire: I do not speak any of the other Singapore official languages. Instead of relying on translations which could

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<sup>19</sup> See Noël and Van der Auwera (2015), for Factiva’s utility in World Englishes research.

<sup>20</sup> Channel NewsAsia is a broadcast news channel that produces an online print version of their broadcast news.

most likely lose important nuances of the texts, I decided to focus on English newspapers so I can analyze them comprehensively.

I set the search timeframe as 1 January 2013 (the month when the Population White Paper was released, which was discussed in Chapter 2) to 31 December 2017, and the geographical region as “Singapore” to isolate articles about citizenship that are not related to Singapore (e.g. many articles about Obama’s citizenship policies, which are not directly relevant to the Singapore context). I also used Factiva’s deduplication feature to eliminate similar articles. The keywords that I used for the collection of the corpus are as follows:

Table 2. Keywords used for the Factiva search

<b>Citizenship as a Notion</b>	<b>Citizenship Categories</b>	<b>Others</b>
Citizenship	Naturaliz/sed Citizens	Citizenship Ceremony
Singapore/an Citizenship	New Citizen/s	Singapore/an Passport
	New Singaporean/s	
	Singapore/an Citizen	

Factiva’s search system is sophisticated enough to allow multiple keywords to be included in one search. The search string that I used was: (singapore\$2 citizen\$4) or (singapore\$2 passport) or (new singaporean\$1) or (new citizen\$1) or (naturaliz?ed citizen\$1) or (citizenship). Keywords are a focal point of interest for corpus linguistics: as Firth (1957) succinctly argues, “you shall know a word by the company it keeps” (p. 11). While this famous quote was made in relation to textual analysis, it still makes sense from an interpretive perspective. When complemented with the researcher’s interpretive knowledge, keywords can provide valuable information not just on a purely textual level but also on an ethnographically contextual one.

How did I come up with this search string? How did I know which keywords to use in my search? This was where my ethnographic knowledge came in. I built the corpus at the final stage of my fieldwork, which meant that I had already completed all my interviews at the time. This meant that I already had an idea of salient keywords (e.g. “new citizen”) and themes (e.g. “Singapore passport”) that were commonly used in my participants’ narratives. A caveat must be stated: selections of keywords potentially skew the data towards them. Because of this methodological issue, I thought it would be reasonable to base the keywords on my fieldwork. This was an instance when Erickson’s (1985, p. 7) description of the fieldwork as an activity where deduction and induction go together. Moreover, this way of selecting keywords is deemed acceptable in corpus-assisted discourse studies, as seen in the studies I discussed in Chapter 3.3.2.

This search generated 3,296 articles, although 648 of them were considered duplicates by Factiva. I excluded the duplicates from the corpus, which resulted in the final number of 2,646 articles, which amounts to 1,945,697 words. The figure below shows the distribution of the articles in the different newspaper sources:

Figure 3. Distribution of the articles in the newspapers



This corpus is the main dataset used in Chapter 5 for two reasons: first, it is the most reliable and comprehensive collection of public discourses (in

contrast to the government documents, which are not as efficiently archived); and second, these newspaper articles also talk about the speeches, press releases, and other discourses of government officials, which means that those discourses can also be found in this corpus. Because my participants claimed that they “follow the news”—which commonly meant viewing newspaper articles shared on their social media feed—and are generally aware of current events in Singapore, I thought that basing the analysis on NEWSCORP was sufficient in providing an overview.

#### *4.4.1.2. Speeches and Press Releases of Government Officials*

I complemented the NEWSCORP data with a corpus of speeches and press releases of government officials (SPRCORP). The documents were extracted from the website of the Prime Minister’s Office, which provides speeches and press releases made by the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister’s Office. This database is not as sophisticated as Factiva in terms of its search functions: for instance, it did not allow multi-keyword searches, which means that I had to improvise other ways to generate as many articles about citizenship as possible.

For the PMO speeches, only one keyword yielded significant results: “new citizens.” Because the results were far from complete (e.g. the newspapers included statements from the PM which were not in the PMO website), I decided to include all the speeches—even those that were made before January 2013, which mentioned “new citizens.” This resulted in 24 articles. I excluded two articles because they were in Chinese, which means that only 22 articles (72,847 words) were included in the corpus.

In order to supplement this with more public media texts from the government, I used the Topics<sup>21</sup> page to search for more materials from the PM, DPM, and PMO which could be potentially relevant to issues of citizenship. Two of the topics listed in the PMO website stood out: “multi-racial and multi-religious society: religion, race relations, use of language” and “population: ageing society, births, immigration, integration, foreign talent.” The former yielded 39 articles (61,266 words) and the latter generated 5 articles (26,511 words).

I also compiled PM Lee’s National Day Rally speeches from 2013-2017. These speeches happen every year during the National Day celebrations in Singapore and are one of the most important speeches that the PM delivers every year. They talk about specific issues (e.g. the 2017 speech was about pre-school system improvement, diabetes prevention and mitigation, lamp posts, and smartphone apps) which tend to reflect bigger social issues that the government aims to address during the year. This corpus consists of 5 speeches (59,669 words).

Because SPRCORP is significantly smaller than NEWSCORP in terms of the keywords that it covers, I excluded this from the quantitative corpus analysis to not skew the balance of the sources of the findings. Given that most of these speeches were covered by the newspapers because they were delivered in public events (e.g. National Day celebration, citizenship ceremonies), not including SPRCORP in the quantitative analysis did not significantly alter the findings. However, this does not mean that SPRCORP

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<sup>21</sup> The PMO website sorts speeches and press releases of the PM, DPM, and PMO according to the most salient topic that underpins them. These are accessible on this webpage; see Singapore, P. M. O. (n.d.).



was completely taken out of the analysis; because SPRCORP was quantitatively limited, I was able to conduct preliminary observations based on my readings and recollections of these speeches, which sensitized me to possible analytical directions that the NEWSCORP analysis could take.

#### 4.4.1.3. Summary of Corpora

The following table summarizes the corpora discussed above.

Table 3. Summary of Corpora

Source			Number of Articles	Number of words
NEWSCORP			2,646	1,945,697
SPRCORP	Keyword Search: “new citizens”		22	72,847
	PMO Topics Page	“Multi-racial & multi-religious society”	39	61,266
		“Population”	5	26,511
	National Day Rally Speeches		5	59,669
TOTAL			2,717	2,165,990

#### 4.4.2. Analyzing the Corpus

To prepare the corpora for a corpus linguistic analysis, I collated the files and saved them into a \*.txt file. I then uploaded them into the corpus software Sketch Engine<sup>22</sup> (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). It is an online software that provides general functions for corpus analysis, such as generating concordance lines and identifying keyness (i.e. the extent of usage of a certain word/lemma/part of speech) based on particular corpora. Sketch Engine has a very useful “word sketch” feature, which allows users to identify trends in how particular keywords are used in the corpora. Baker (2012) argues that

<sup>22</sup> The tool can be accessed at <http://www.sketchengine.co.uk>.

Sketch Engine has a “...particularly impressive aspect...that it gives detailed collocational information based on lexico-grammatical relationships” (p. 3). While I initially considered using other software which are widely used in corpus linguistic research such as AntConc Version 3.5.0<sup>23</sup> (Anthony, 2017), Wordsmith Tools version 7<sup>24</sup> (Scott, 2017), and WMatrix 3<sup>25</sup> (Rayson, 2008), I decided to use Sketch Engine because it has most of the features that the other software have<sup>26</sup>, and because of its word sketch function.

The analytical procedure begins by getting an overall sense of the corpora by looking at general patterns of how the keywords are used through word sketches. General frequency counts of the keywords were also included in this step. To identify key themes of the representations of citizenship and new citizens in the corpus, I used Sketch Engine’s word sketch function—a “summary of a word’s grammatical and collocational behavior” (Kilgarriff, et al., 2014, p. 9)—to find out the words that frequently occur with “citizenship”. The word sketch is based on different grammatical structures (e.g. ‘modifiers of “citizenship”’, ‘nouns and verbs modified by “citizenship”’, ‘verbs with “citizenship” as subject/object’, ““citizenship” and/or’, ‘adjective predicates of “citizenship”’, ““citizenship is a...”, etc.) of the keyword. The word sketch then gives us a good picture of how “citizenship” was generally talked about, and draw themes based on the sketch. The themes were not purely decided by just looking at the words listed in the sketch; rather, the concordances of the

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<sup>23</sup> The software can be downloaded from <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>.

<sup>24</sup> The software can be downloaded from <http://lexically.net/wordsmith/purchase/>.

<sup>25</sup> The software can be accessed at <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix/>.

<sup>26</sup> One important feature that WMatrix has and Sketch Engine does not is semantic tagging. However, this was not useful in my analysis.

words were examined as well to see what the word usually means in context. For instance, “journey” showed up in the word sketch of “citizenship.” Just by looking at the word itself, one may deduce that “journey” is a conceptual metaphor of “citizenship,” such as “...one’s journey to Singapore citizenship...”. However, the concordances show that all instances of “journey” that co-occurred with “citizenship” were about the “Singapore Citizenship Journey,” the compulsory requirement for citizenship applicants discussed in Chapter 2. Hence, I based the themes on the concordances of the words that appeared in the word sketch. The concordances of the keywords were also helpful in giving me a better understanding on the overall tone and topic of the articles because they show the collocates of the keywords and how they behave in their textual environment. Concordance lines enrich my findings because they provide actual examples of how the keywords were used in the corpus, which is the first step in finding out how the corpora discursively construct the notions of citizenship in the public media texts.

Using corpus linguistics in my analysis of public media texts helped me systematically account for the linguistic patterns in the texts. These patterns include semantic evaluations, transitivity, and topic analysis. I also complemented my corpus analysis (Chapter 5) with a close analysis of two sample articles (Chapters 5.2.4 and 5.3.4) which were included in the corpus. I decided to do this in order to provide a discussion of the general corpus findings in the context of the articles themselves. I analyzed this text by using methods from (critical) discourse analysis and systemic functional linguistics, such as the analysis of transitivity patterns, verb processes, and pronominal markers. These were inspired by the studies that I discussed in Chapter 3.3.2.

Being able to systematically examine the “general” trends and patterns (cf. Erickson, 1985, p. 6) of the corpus composed of thousands of articles enabled me to better approach the meanings of the “linguistic and textual fine-grain” (Rampton, 2007, p. 585) of these public media texts.

#### **4.5. Interview Data**

In Section 4.3.2, I explained my reasons for collecting interview data. I must emphasize that I view my interview data not as unquestionable versions of truths, but as discourses that arise from the interactional activity of the interview. I view these interview narratives as opportunities to understand how my participants recalled their life experiences and immigration histories.

Briggs (2007) argues that interviews are highly ideological; he claims that “...the way they [interviews] are conducted, analyzed, and presented tends to maximize their ability to embody notions of self-expression, publication, and social interaction” (p. 554). He expounds this point by arguing three things:

1. “...psychiatric, oral historical, and life-history interviews center on individual interviewees and the process of self-disclosure, painting interviews as powerful windows into a person’s experiences, memories, and feelings” (p. 554);
2. “...other strategies foreground the *social interaction* of the interview, generating authority and authenticity by construing the interaction in particular ways and making texts or broadcasts seem like direct embodiments of the encounter between interviewee and interviewer” (p. 554; italics in original); and

3. "...interviews are commonly portrayed not just as ordinary conversations but as carefully structured to elicit inner worlds with minimal intervention and to maximize their value for public discourse..." (p. 555).

In other words, interviews can gather information; reflect social relationships; and reflect, reinforce, or challenge the private/public dichotomy that encompasses the interviewing activity itself. These points became relevant to my fieldwork. In the case of my fieldwork, the interviews allowed me to access the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of participants which could, in some cases, be inaccessible to me. For instance, there were experiences which I was not able to, and will never be able to, observe as a researcher, such as the closed-door meetings of my participants with immigration officers. Similarly, because the process of migrating into Singapore and of applying for Singapore citizenship take time, interviews become a feasible way for me to get to know what my participants have experienced as migrants and new citizens in Singapore. Finally, interviews allowed me to get a sense of the thoughts and emotions of my participants during the different stages of their migration or citizenship application. These are pieces of information that are essential in understanding how my participants make sense of their own citizenship journeys. It should be noted that interviews would not be able to fully encapsulate the "truths" behind what had really happened or how my participants had really thought during their immigration process. This is reminiscent of a point made by Hymes (1996): "people are notoriously unable or unwilling to give accurate accounts of the amount of time they spend on various things" (p. 10). Because migration backgrounds and citizenship

changes could be considered sensitive topics by some people, it would be incorrect to claim that my participants had told me *everything* that could be said about their citizenship journeys.

Moreover, the interviews provided me with an opportunity to examine how my participants talked about their citizenship journeys in relation to me as the interviewer (i.e. the interactional aspect of the interview). After all, the interviews are interactionally constructed accounts of my participants' lived experiences (see Talmy, 2010; Wortham et al., 2011). As I will demonstrate later in Chapters 6 and 7, my participants' narratives exhibited linguistic patterns that could be attributed to the interactional nature of the interview.

Finally, my participants knew that the interviews were going to be used in this thesis and in related presentations and publications in the future. Hence, they were cognizant of the fact that their narratives will be transmitted to the public to a certain extent, even though their identities will be kept confidential (i.e. the private/personal aspect). Because of this, I also examined my interview data based on what my participants foregrounded or deemphasized during the interview. As Blommaert and Dong (2010) state, "it is not just *what* people tell you, but also *how* they tell it that requires our attention" (p. 43; italics in original). Given that migration histories and citizenship changes could be considered private and personal information, my investigation had to focus on what my participants chose to talk about during the interviews and how they talked about it. Hence, I viewed the interview data as sources of the *what* and the *how* of my participants' talk about citizenship.

In this section, I provide details of how I recruited my participants and what my interview structure was like. I then introduce my participants by

presenting their demographic information and general patterns of their migratory backgrounds. I conclude this section by explaining how I analyzed the interviews.

#### 4.5.1. Recruitment of Participants

I employed a combination of convenience and snowballing sampling methods in recruiting my participants. Because I had already been living in Singapore for more than three years when I started the fieldwork, I was fortunate that I knew people who could participate in my study. I started the search from my closest social networks because I was already familiar with their lived experiences about citizenship. I then expanded my search to friends of friends.

Initially, I had only wanted to recruit participants who were willing to be interviewed and observed. However, I eventually realized that many of my participants were only willing to do the former but not the latter due to their busy schedules and/or their being uncomfortable with my presence in their own social networks. I then decided to allow my participants to opt out of the observations.

During the initial stages of the fieldwork, when I was still relying on my own social networks, I started to wonder whether I was only recruiting participants from backgrounds very similar to mine. Because I wanted to have participants from various backgrounds, I started to rely on snowballing. This proved to be productive because I ended up recruiting participants from very different backgrounds, such as their countries of origin, profession, and age. One thing that should be highlighted at this point is that all my participants

who were new citizens or long-term pass holders who were considering applying for Singapore citizenship come from fairly privileged economic backgrounds. All of them are highly educated, and nobody reported facing serious economic concerns. This became relevant to the analysis in Chapters 6, which focuses on my participants' self-positioning as mobile individuals. I attribute this to Singapore immigration policy, specifically the "eligibility requirements," which I discussed in Chapter 2. A summary of my participants' demographic information can be found below.



Table 4. Participants' Information Sheet

#	Name (Sex; Age)	Contact History	Nature of Participation	Previous Citizen- ship	Job/ Industry	Education	Years of Living in SG	Years of being an SG Citizen	Family	Languages
1	Arya (F; 21)	Through a colleague	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Refused	Indian	BA Student	Studied in SG since primary school	14 years; moved when she was 7 years old	7 years	Family members are SG citizens now	English; Tamil
2	Arthur (M; 25)	Brother of Mandy, a participant	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Refused	Filipino	Computing application consultant/ modeling	BS from SG	17-18 years; moved when he was 7	8 years	Family members are SG citizens now	English; Tagalog; basic Mandarin
3	Chad (M; 29)	Through a friend's mother	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Refused	Chinese	Graduate student and analyst in a bank	MS from SG; BS from China	14 years; moved when he was 15	Less than a year	Family members are Chinese citizens	English; Mandarin; Jiang Xi dialect
4	Isabel (F; 34)	Through a colleague	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Refused	Indonesian	University HR	MS from SG; BS from Canada	20 years; moved when she was 14	8 years	Sister wants to apply for citizenship; parents are Indonesian citizens	English; Bahasa Indonesia

5	Jenny (F; 25)	Friend of Joanna, participant	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Yes (chat with friends)	Malaysian	Auditing	BS from SG	19 years; moved when she was 6	Less than a year	Family members are Malaysian citizens	English; Mandarin; Cantonese
6	Jinky (F; 28)	Friend since 2015	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Refused	Malaysian	PhD student	MA from SG and China; BA from SG	9 years; moved when she was 21	Less than a year	Family members are Malaysian citizens; husband and in-laws are local-born SG citizens	English; Cantonese, Mandarin; Hokkien; Malay; basic Teochew and French
7	Joanna (F; 25)	Friend since 2010	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Yes (chat with friends)	Filipino	Teacher in training	MA from UK; BA and Post Graduate Degree in Education from SG	9 years; moved when she was 16	5 years	Siblings are SG citizens; parents are Filipino citizens	English; Tagalog; basic Chinese
8	Jose (M; 26)	Sister of Joanna, participant	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Yes (band practice)	Filipino	Architect; owner of a music studio	Diploma from SG	9 years; moved when he was 16	1 year	Siblings are SG citizens; parents are Filipino citizens	English; Tagalog; basic Malay

9	Mandy (F; 21)	Through my former students	Interview: Yes, Interactional Recording: Yes (chat with friends)	Filipino	Polytechnic student; intern at an auditing firm	Studied in Singapore since primary school	19 years; moved when she was 1.5	7 years	Family members are SG citizens	English; Tagalog; basic Mandarin
10	Mario (M; 43)	Through a friend	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Yes (football)	Turkish	Warehouse manager, MNC	BS from Turkey	6 years; moved when he was 37	2 years	Family members are Turkish citizens; wife and children are local-born SG citizens.	English; Turkish; Arabic; basic Spanish
11	Nigel (M; 46)	Through a friend's mother	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Refused	German	Senior director in an MNC bank	Grammar School from Germany	6.5 years moved when he was 39	2 years	Family members are German citizens	German; English; basic French and Chinese
12	Patrice (F; 42)	Through a friend's mother	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Refused	Malaysian	Banking	MBA from UK; BS from SG	Born and raised in Singapore (as a PR)	Less than a year	Family members are Malaysian citizens; husband is local-born SG citizen	English; Mandarin; Hakka; basic Teochew and Hokkien

13	Sharon (F; 34)	Through a friend	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Yes (lunch with colleagues)	Filipino	Manager in a financial company	MS from SG; BS from Philippines	9 years; moved when she was 24	Less than a year	Family members are Filipino citizens; husband is PR; child is SG citizen	Tagalog; English; basic Chinese
14	Skanda (M; 21)	Through a colleague	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Yes (dinner and video games with friends)	Indian	BS student	Studied in Singapore since primary school	14 years; moved when he was 7	2 years	Family members are SG citizens	English; Tamil; basic Spanish
15	Sophia (F; 36)	Through a friend's mother	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Refused	Malaysian	Banking	BS from Australia	9 years	Less than a year	Family members are Malaysian; husband and two daughters are local- born SG citizens	English; Cantonese; Malay
16	Soraya (F; 33)	Friend since 2014	Interview: Yes, Interactional Recording: Yes (chat with friends)	Sri Lankan	Graduate student	PhD student at NUS, MA and BA from NUS	15; moved when she was 18	8 years	Family members are Sri Lankan; husband is American who is a Singapore PR	English; basic Sinhalese

17	Victoria (F; 26)	Through a colleague	Interview: Yes; Interactional Recording: Refused	Malaysian	Inspector for a government bureau	Studied in Singapore since primary school	Commuted daily from Malaysia to Singapore since 7	2 years	Family members are Malaysian citizens but also Singapore PR	English; Mandarin; basic Malay, Bahasa Indonesia, Teochew, and Hokkien
18	Yarn (M; 32)	Through a colleague	Interview: Yes (Skype); Interactional Recording: not possible (he was based in the US)	Chinese	PhD student	PhD student in the US; BS and MS from SG	15.5 years	Less than a year	Family members are Chinese citizens; wife is a Chinese citizen and Singapore PR	Mandarin; Hu Bei dialect; English; basic Japanese, French, German, and Russian

#### 4.5.2. Interview Structure

I conducted semi-structured interviews with all my participants, which were all audio-recorded. These interviews generally probed into three major topics. The first revolved around the reasons behind the decision of participants to migrate to Singapore, and consequently, apply for PR and Singapore citizenship. The second major topic was the citizenship application process: specifically, the Singapore Citizenship Journey. The third was about the statements that my participants made while narrating incidents when they felt that issues of citizenship mattered to them. These topics allowed me to have a sense of how my participants talked about citizenship explicitly—such as their responses to my direct questions about what they think citizenship means—and implicitly—such as their narratives about their experiences and how they reflect citizenship issues. The interviews also enabled me to see how they account for their emotions and lived experiences during our interaction, which shows me how they position themselves as new citizens during the interview. A copy of the interview guide can be found in the Appendix.

While I generally followed the overall structure of my interview guide, I gave my participants the liberty to talk about their own experiences freely. Because I only speak English and Tagalog, my interviews with participants who did not have any Filipino background were conducted in English. As for Tagalog speakers, I asked them whether they preferred to conduct the interview in English or Tagalog; all of them said that they preferred English.

There were few instances of codeswitching during these interviews; when relevant to the analysis, I provided my own translations<sup>27</sup>.

As a participant of the interview, I was in a position to co-construct the outcome of the interview. Because of this, I made it a point to include my questions and reactions in the interview transcripts, except in parts where my question was included in the main text. Moreover, I may have been influenced by my own knowledge of what the interview was about. While I made my participants talk about their experiences when they migrated to and take up PR in Singapore, I also knew that I was going to focus on citizenship.

Moreover, the interview activity itself could have influenced my participants' narratives. It is likely that my participants were primed into the topic of citizenship by the participant information sheet, which they had to read and sign before they officially became my research participants. While this inevitable methodological requirement (i.e. giving my participants an idea of what the nature of their participation in the research is, as well as telling them why they were being recruited) may be construed as a form of priming them, and the resulting interview, into the topic of citizenship, it still worked insofar as constructing citizenship discursively is concerned. This means that they may have been aware of the primary focus of the interview; that is, how they view and experience citizenship as part of their lived experiences.

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<sup>27</sup> Translations of ethnographic data are heavily problematized in anthropology. For instance, Chambers (2006; cf. Clifford & Marcus, 1986) explains the problems that arise when “foreign concepts are explained through [presumably] smooth, unproblematic translation” (pp. 5-6). I tried my best to be as faithful as possible to what I thought my participants were trying to say, so I was also critical of my own translations.

#### 4.5.3. Analyzing the Interviews

I transcribed the interviews using two software, Transcriber<sup>28</sup> and NVivo<sup>29</sup>; the former is purely a transcription software and the latter is a qualitative data analysis software which includes a transcription function. To familiarize myself with the patterns in the interview narratives, I developed a set of preliminary thematic codes<sup>30</sup> which I used on five sample interviews. I first identified patterns from these five interviews to have a glimpse of the similarities and differences of the interview narratives. During the analysis, I focused on the interviews individually to have a better understanding of the transcripts.

Some themes were more easily identifiable than others, perhaps because of the interview structure. For instance, all my participants had to answer my questions about their motivation for applying for Singapore citizenship. However, some themes, such as the affective themes discussed in Chapter 6, were embedded in multiple parts of the interview, which meant that it was initially more challenging to identify their relevance to this study. I had to revisit every interview and observation I conducted while I was trying to identify the focus of this study and while writing this thesis.

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<sup>28</sup> Transcriber can be downloaded for free at <http://trans.sourceforge.net/en/presentation.php>.

<sup>29</sup> NVivo can be purchased at <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/home>. I was fortunate that KCL provides its students with free NVivo access.

<sup>30</sup> More information on NVivo coding can be found at [http://help-nv11.qsrinternational.com/desktop/concepts/about\\_coding.htm](http://help-nv11.qsrinternational.com/desktop/concepts/about_coding.htm).



#### 4.5.4. Overview of Participants' Migratory Backgrounds

In this section, I present a few preliminary observations about my participants' discussions of their immigration histories. The information listed in this section were extracted from my participants' responses to the first few questions that I asked during the interview, which were themselves questions that aimed to contextualize the discussion about citizenship. The discussion in this section should just be considered as preliminary observations, and not as deeply analytical points, because my handling of the interviews, which focused on their citizenship journeys, cannot fully account for the complexity of their reasons and emotions about migrating to and taking up PR in Singapore.

I loosely used the word “reasons” to summarize the points mentioned in this section. It was a word that was commonly used in the interviews. The “reasons” that my participants gave me may have been canned responses—or the type of responses that people give when asked about their immigration histories. This means that the reasons I listed here are based on my interpretation of the most salient ones are based on how the interview unfolded. This may or may not be consistent with what their actual reasons are and should just be taken as claims made in the interviews.

##### *4.5.4.1. Narratives about Migrating to Singapore*

All my participants gave many reasons for migrating to Singapore—some more than others. The interviews reveal that all these reasons are based on my participants' perceptions of benefits; that is, all of them claimed that

migrating to Singapore opens up many opportunities and benefits. The table below summarizes these reasons.

Table 5. Primary Reasons for Moving to Singapore

No	Name	Sex	Age	Former Citizenship	Age When S/he Moved	Primary Reasons for Moving to Singapore
1	Arya	F	21	Indian	7	Decision of parents; parents found a job and wanted the family to be together
2	Arthur	M	25	Filipino	7	Decision of parents; parents found a job and wanted the family to be together
3	Chad	M	29	Chinese	15	Education (pre-university requirements); scholarship grant
4	Isabel	F	34	Indonesian	14	Education (secondary school)
5	Jenny	F	25	Malaysian	6	Decision of parents; parents found a job and wanted the family to be together
6	Jinky	F	28	Malaysian	21	Education (university); culture is similar to Malaysia
7	Joanna	F	25	Filipino	16	Decision of parents; parents found a job and wanted the family to be together
8	Jose	M	26	Filipino	17	Decision of parents; parents found a job and wanted the family to be together
9	Mandy	F	21	Filipino	1	Decision of parents; parents found a job and wanted the family to be together

10	Mario	M	37	Turkish	31	Career; predominance of English in Singapore is good for his international family; good way of life for his family
11	Nigel	M	46	German	40	Career; did not like living in the UK (former place of residence) and Germany (country of origin) anymore
12	Patrice	F	42	Malaysian	0	Born in Singapore in a Malaysian family
13	Sharon	F	34	Filipino	25	Education (postgraduate)
14	Skanda	M	21	Indian	7	Decision of parents; parents found a job and wanted the family to be together
15	Sophia	F	36	Malaysian	27	Career; Singapore being close to Malaysia geographically and socially
16	Soraya	F	33	Sri Lankan	15	Education (secondary school)
17	Victoria	F	26	Malaysian	21	Education (university); more convenient than commuting from Malaysia everyday
18	Yarn	M	32	Chinese	17	Education (pre-university requirements); scholarship grant

This table presents a few points that provide a good introduction to the analysis in Chapters 6 and 7:

1. Based on the interview narratives, there are two main reasons behind the decision of my participants to move to Singapore:

education/occupational benefits and decision of parents. The first reason applies to participants who were already of legal age when they migrated to Singapore, while the second applies to participants who were still young to make the decision for themselves.

2. The responses of my participants suggest that material benefits seem to be the underlying motivation of my participants who were already of legal age when they moved to Singapore. For those whose decisions were made by their parents, they explicitly claimed that the decision was made by their parents; hence, they claimed that they did not think about it much because they did not have a choice but to follow their families. An exception of this was Joanna—she had wanted to stay in the Philippines, but her parents “tricked her” into moving to Singapore by pretending that Joanna was just going to have a holiday in Singapore.
3. The underlying motivation behind these reasons seems to be material benefits, such as education and career options. While a few participants, such as those who used to be Malaysian (i.e. Jinky, Sophia, Victoria), identified the cultural similarities of Singapore to Malaysia as a reason for choosing to migrate to Singapore, all the other participants did not make any explicit links between their decision to migrate to Singapore and their identities or emotions. Hence, based on how my participants talked about their reasons for migrating to Singapore, material benefits generally underpinned their decisions.

4. Two participants stand out for having reasons which the other participants did not explicitly label as reasons: Nigel, who chose to have a career in Singapore because he has stopped liking living in Germany (where he was born and raised) and the UK (where he used to live), and Patrice, who was born in Singapore to a Malaysian family. While it can be argued that my participants' liking of Singapore can include the converse disliking of their countries of origin only Nigel explicitly labeled his dislike of Germany and the UK as a reason for moving to Singapore.
5. The participants who had "education" as a reason linked education to future career prospects. This means that while they explicitly identified education as a reason for moving to Singapore, this should not be taken per se because it is embedded in their envisioning of their future careers.

The points above will be alluded to in Chapters 6 and 7, where I provide a detailed analysis of my participants' articulations of citizenship in relation to their emotions and lived experiences.

#### *4.5.4.2. Narratives about PR*

In this section, I provide an overview of my participants' reasons for applying for and taking up PR, based on what they talked about in the interviews. This section shares the same premises as above: these are based on what they explicitly labeled as "reasons" for doing so during the interview, and they may or may not encapsulate all their other reasons for doing so.

Table 6. Primary Reasons for Taking Up PR

No	Name	Sex	Age	Former Citizenship	Primary Reasons for Applying for PR
1	Arya	F	21	Indian	Parents applied for the whole family
2	Arthur	M	25	Filipino	Parents applied for the whole family
3	Chad	M	29	Chinese	Invited to apply by the government; took it up for economic reasons, specifically, job opportunities and stability
4	Isabel	F	34	Indonesian	Economic reasons, specifically, job opportunities and stability
5	Jenny	F	25	Malaysian	Liked the living standards in Singapore; job opportunities
6	Jinky	F	28	Malaysian	Invited to apply by the government; took it up for economic benefits on the long-term that she foresaw at the time
7	Joanna	F	25	Filipino	Parents applied for the whole family
8	Jose	M	26	Filipino	Parents applied for the whole family
9	Mandy	F	21	Filipino	Parents applied for the whole family
10	Mario	M	37	Turkish	Requirement for citizenship application (his wife and children were Singapore citizens at the time of his application)
11	Nigel	M	46	German	Invited to apply by the government; took it up because he liked living in Singapore; he needed to be a PR to do his volunteering work
12	Patrice	F	42	Malaysian	Parents applied for the whole family; she was born a PR.
13	Sharon	F	34	Filipino	Liked the living standards in Singapore; job opportunities; met her boyfriend who eventually became her husband
14	Skanda	M	21	Indian	Parents applied for the whole family
15	Sophia	F	36	Malaysian	Liked the living standards in Singapore; job opportunities
16	Soraya	F	33	Sri Lankan	Liked the living standards in Singapore; job opportunities
17	Victoria	F	26	Malaysian	Liked the living standards in Singapore; job opportunities
18	Yarn	M	32	Chinese	Liked the living standards in Singapore; job opportunities

A few preliminary observations can be made from this:

1. Similar to the table above, there are two main types of respondents: those who chose to apply for PR on their own, and those who just followed the decision of their parents. An example of the first group is Sharon who decided to apply for PR for her romantic relationship and career. An example of the second group is Patrice, who was born a PR because her parents were PRs.
2. The group of participants who decided to apply for PR out of their own volition can be divided into two: those who were invited by the government to apply (e.g. Jinky, Nigel, Chad) and those who were not (e.g. Isabel, Victoria, Yarn).
3. The reasons above that were explicitly identified by my participants are comparable to the reasons in the previous section because they are both driven by material benefits. However, there is one major difference between the two. My participants talked about these benefits in the interviews not just as values on their own, but also in relation to their long-term plans and their notions of settling down and permanence. For instance, “job opportunities” were talked about by my participants in relation to how they envision themselves as residents of Singapore on the long-term. This suggests that these material benefits are viewed by my participants from the perspective of what they think is good for them in the long run.
4. While many participants talked about having an attachment to Singapore, nobody claimed that the change to PR status had an impact on their identities. One good example of this is Jinky. She

moved to Singapore to pursue her university degree because she thought that Singapore universities are significantly better than Malaysia's. In the interview, she said that she took some time to finally decide to move to Singapore for this reason, even though she had been initially held back by her emotional connection to Penang, her hometown. She described the process of getting a PR as “you don't lose a thing” and “you don't have to sacrifice a thing at all.” She seems to suggest that the decision to take PR did not require an extensive amount of deliberation, contrary to when she decided to move to Singapore for educational reasons, because the costs seem to be so minimal especially when juxtaposed with the benefits that go along with it. All my participants claimed to have spent more time thinking about whether to move to Singapore or not more than whether they should apply for and take up PR or not.

5. There are only two participants who claimed that they had hesitations about applying for PR. The first is Mario. He was initially unhappy that he would have to start paying for his Central Provident Fund (CPF) contributions—a government-mandated compulsory savings plan for Singaporean citizens and PRs which aims to support their long-term needs such as retirement, housing, and healthcare—when he received his PR. Another participant<sup>31</sup>, during my observations after the interview, said that s/he had doubts about taking up PR because it meant that s/he would never

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<sup>31</sup> This participant explicitly said that I cannot attribute this comment to him/her, not even to his/her anonymized persona in the thesis. In this regard, I used “s/he” in this sentence.



be able to try smoking marijuana because it is illegal for PRs to consume any illegal drugs even outside Singapore. Both of them then said that their inhibitions were superseded by the benefits that they could receive from being PR. For instance, Mario said that he eventually came to terms with the CPF and he knew that he needed to be PR to become a Singapore citizen. The anonymous participant said that this paled in comparison to all the benefits that s/he could receive as PR.

#### *4.5.4.3. Synthesis*

In this section, I presented an overview of the key issues behind the immigration histories and trajectories of my participants. My participants' recollections of their reasons for moving to and taking up PR in Singapore were mostly because of material benefits, such as economic opportunities, security and stability; education and financial subsidies; family stability; and passport and travel convenience. While some of my participants claimed that they had non-material and non-economic considerations behind such decisions, they all downplayed their effects on their eventual decision and claimed that material and economic benefits actually drove them to make such immigration choices. While it can be argued that this might be because the interviews did not specifically focus on these discussions, which consequently limited the nuances of their responses, the fact that all my participants (except for those who moved to Singapore at a very young age or who were raised as PRs) shared this rhetoric suggests that this deliberation was indeed driven by material considerations.

Because the interviews delved into my participants' recollections of their citizenship application process and their experiences as new citizens, their narratives about citizenship were more detailed and pronounced. Because of this, attempting to summarize it as I did above would be unproductive because it would deliberately ignore nuances that my participants explicitly talked about in the interviews. Hence, it would be more productive to examine how citizenship becomes relevant to them based on their various lived experiences, which I do in Chapters 6 and 7. While the actual political definition of citizenship might seem like a coherent topic insofar as it can set official authorizations of membership/non-membership in the nation-state, its actual manifestations tend to not be because people's lived experiences allow for the surfacing of multiple construals of citizenship.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

This chapter explains my reasons for choosing my research paradigm and research design and details the steps that I took in collecting and analyzing my data. The corpus dataset is particularly relevant to Chapter 5 and the interview dataset provides serves as the basis of Chapters 6 and 7.

I wish to conclude this section by providing a brief comment on representation and partiality. Interpretive findings are not statements of the absolute truth; rather, they are representations made by the researcher, and to a certain extent, the institution that the researcher represents. While I enumerated my ways of attempting to be systematic (Erickson, 1985; Rampton, 2007; Blommaert & Dong, 2010) in this chapter, I must highlight the fact that this thesis is a product of my own writing, and that comes with

complications. Crapanzano (1977) claims that many studies (in anthropology) have "...ignored the structural presuppositions and implications of the text by which it conveys its data, meanings, hypotheses, and theoretical confabulations..." (p. 69). Writing is representation, and representations take multiple forms. Chambers (2006) raises an important question:

The ethnographer also has to choose a narrative form in which to present her findings. Does she conform to the scientism and impersonal style of "classic" ethnography, or does she experiment with form, attempting to represent polyphony by transcribing swathes of dialogue with participants or by using a fragmentary structure? (p. 5).

This question is relevant because it also applies to the interpretive approach. Writing interpretive accounts is not just about style; it is also a reflection of epistemology. However, I had to make a decision when I wrote this text. This decision was out of my personal reasons: I believed I could provide a better account of citizenship in Singapore in this style because I am better-versed in it. I also thought this writing style could speak better to scholars from fields I envision this study would be useful for, especially sociolinguists. While this choice may have inhibited me from developing or producing knowledge based on how I wrote, I believe this choice was still best in producing knowledge based on how I chose to write. It is in this light that throughout the writing process, I tried to be critical of how I wrote and how I represented my participants and their life stories. I provided vignettes and supplementary details (cf. Erickson, 1985) as an attempt to represent my participants well. In instances when the demarcating line between my own

interpretation and my participants' voices becomes blurred, I alert my readers to this (cf. Watson, 1987: p. 35). In this study, I do not claim that I provide *the* way of understanding my participants' narratives; rather, I claim that I provide *a* way of doing so. Clifford and Marcus' (1986) comments on ethnographic partiality apply to the interpretive approach. They argue, "ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial—committed and incomplete...but once accepted and built into ethnographic art, a rigorous sense of partiality can be a source of representational tact" (p. 7). This study does not aim to conclude the academic conversation on the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore—it aims to continue the conversation, and hopefully, provide new ways of going forward.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Representations of Citizenship and New Citizens in Public Media Texts**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter discusses how the notion of citizenship and the category of the “new citizen” are represented in Singapore newspapers. This chapter aims to identify the different representations of citizenship and the new citizen, which serves as a sensitizing context of the two succeeding analytical chapters, which focus on the interview narratives of my participants.

The analysis in this chapter is based on the corpus I built for this study, which was discussed in the previous chapter. It must be emphasized that the claims in this chapter are therefore only based on this 1,945,697-word corpus, which consists of 2,646 articles published between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2017 by four English newspapers in Singapore—which are part of mainstream media that tend to align with the position of the Singapore government (see Lim, 2014; discussed in Chapter 2). Moreover, because this chapter only aims to provide us with an overview of how citizenship and new citizens were represented in the corpus, it did not account for variations of representations across the sources and across time periods.

I begin this chapter by analyzing the representations of citizenship as a notion (starting from the “citizenship” keyword), which is followed by a discussion of the representations of citizenship categories (starting from the “citizen” keyword), with a focus on the new citizen. I then provide a metapragmatic interpretation of these findings in order to explain how the representations identified in this chapter semiotically connect with each other,

which facilitates our understanding of how the notion of citizenship and citizenship categories are constructed in the corpus. I conclude this chapter by providing a synthesis of the findings, and by raising questions that lead us to the following chapters.

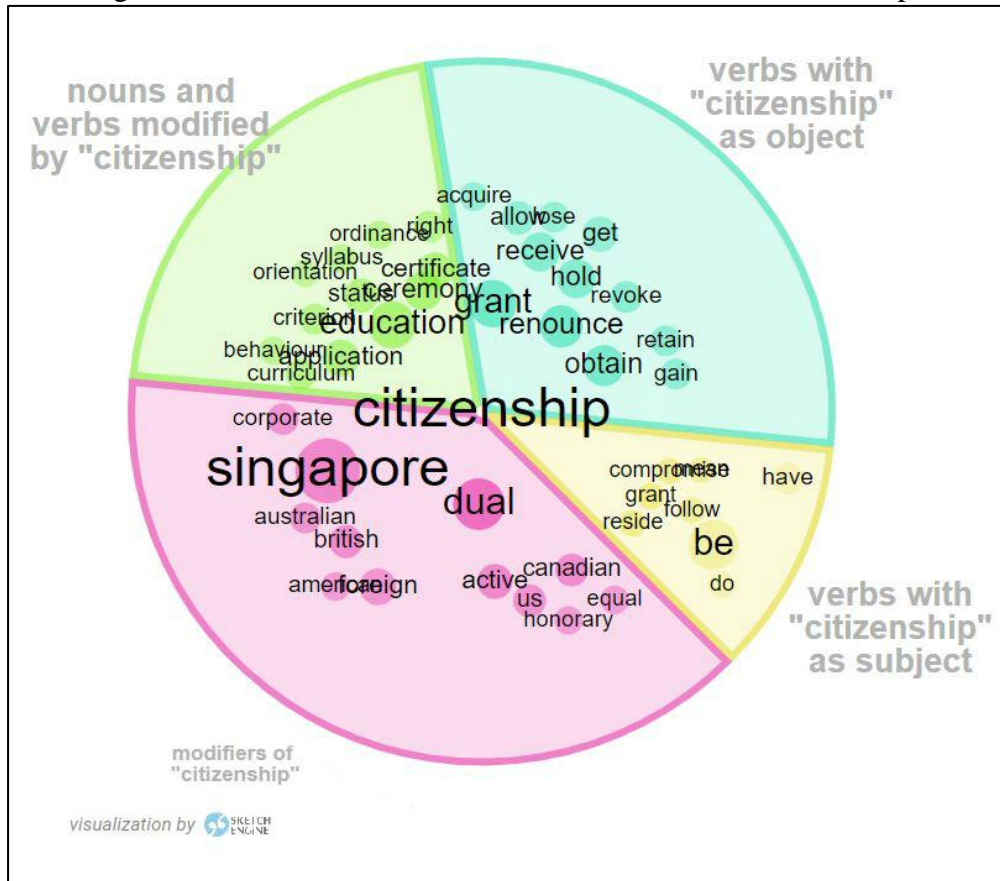
## **5.2. Representations of Citizenship as a Notion**

In this section, I discuss how the newspapers construct citizenship as a notion based on lexical patterns, identified through the analysis of collocations and grammatical relations, and themes that emerge from them. The goal of this section is twofold: first, to enumerate the different representations of citizenship in newspapers to understand the dominant themes associated with citizenship; and second, to provide a sensitizing context to the discursive construction of the “new citizen” (next section) and the narratives of my participants (the two following chapters).

### **5.2.1. Lexical Associations of “Citizenship”**

The word sketch of the keyword “citizenship” is a good place to start the analysis of how citizenship is represented in the newspapers because it reveals the most frequent words associated with citizenship. This keyword occurs 1,643 times in the corpus. The figure below, generated through Sketch Engine’s visualization feature, provides as a good overview of these lexical associations:

Figure 4. Visualization of the lexical associations of "citizenship".



As the figure shows, there are four structures where most of the lexical associations were generated from: nouns and verbs modified by “citizenship,” verbs with “citizenship as object,” modifiers of “citizenship,” and verbs with “citizenship” as subject. The figure only includes the most common words (based on raw frequency) that occurred within each category and this is represented by the size of the keyword and the circle that represents it: for instance, “Singapore” and “dual” appear bigger than “gain” because of their higher raw frequency (“dual citizenship” and “Singapore citizenship” will be explained in Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, respectively). I examined all the words that belong to these categories and grouped them into themes which I based on how they generally occurred with citizenship. This is summarized in the table below.

Table 7. Summary of words associated with "citizenship"

No.	Theme (Frequency)	Associated Words (Frequency)	
Newspapers			
1	Citizenship is a <i>concrete object</i> or <i>possession</i> (553)	Positive Thematic Association (231)	grant (83), give (62), allow (19), retain (12), gain (12), offer (11), acquire (8), promote (8), award (6), attain (5), seek (5)
		Negative Thematic Association (85)	renounce (55), revoke (14), relinquish (6), deny (4), compromise (3), strip (3),
		Neutral Thematic Association (237)	take (69), obtain (48), hold (39), receive (39), get (25), have (14), evaluate (3)
Examples: 1. Positive: “The message is clear, Singaporean citizenship <i>granted</i> <sup>32</sup> to a foreign national is a privilege...” 2. Negative: “Later that year, lawyers acting for the family requested that Tan's NS be deferred until he turned 21 when he intended to <i>renounce</i> his citizenship. CMPB rejected the request, as well as a subsequent appeal.” 3. Neutral: “The scholarships are open to Singaporeans or Singapore permanent residents who will <i>take up</i> citizenship, and come with a six-year bond.”			
2	Citizenship is a <i>political status</i> (249)	dual (111), residency (37), residence (18), pr (i.e. permanent residence; 16), rights (15), status (12), honorary (7), ordinance (7), old (5), same (5), law (4), automatic (3), category (3), government (3) original (3)	
E.g. “Mr Vbornov, who holds <i>dual</i> citizenship of Russia and St Kitts-Nevis in the Caribbean, is suing vendor Capitol Residential Development in the High Court...”			
3	Citizenship is a product of a <i>regimented application system</i> (135)	ceremony (37), application (30), certificate (27), criterion (12), department (7), programme (7), [Singapore Citizenship] journey (5), applicant (4), document (3)	
E.g. “The new Singapore citizens sang the National Anthem and recited the Pledge at the citizenship <i>ceremony</i> organised by Tanjong Pagar GRC on the 50th floor of The Pinnacle@Duxton.”			
4	Citizenship is an <i>educational topic</i> (103)	education (80), curriculum (12), education (4), class (4), lesson (3)	

<sup>32</sup> In this chapter, I use italicization to highlight the word (e.g. "granted") associated with the keyword (e.g. "citizenship") I am focusing on. I did not italicize "citizenship" because this table is about words that are associated with it.



E.g. “When it comes to socio-emotional learning, Character and Citizenship Education helps with that to some extent – kids learn social skills, empathy, respect and awareness of the effects of mean actions on others.”		
5	Citizenship is a <i>country-based attribute</i> (95)	British (18), Canadian (17), US (17), Australian (12), American (8), Chinese (7), Malaysian (7), Indonesian (5), Italian (4),
E.g. “he was eligible to apply for a <i>British</i> citizenship only if her indefinite leave to remain was still valid and she met the residency requirements of the country.”		
6	Citizenship is an <i>abstract concept</i> that has various types (53)	active (24), corporate (14), equal (7), global (5), participative (3)
E.g. “As we mark our nation's 52nd year of independent governance, my birthday wish for Singapore is that we never forget <i>active</i> citizenship is ALL up to us.”		
7	Citizenship is a <i>way of life</i> (31)	character (9), behaviour <sup>33</sup> (7), identity (5), community (4), activity (3), life (3), value (3)
E.g. “She said: “Our main aim is actually to develop citizenship and <i>character</i> in our students...”		
8	Citizenship is an issue that requires deliberation (24)	want (10), thinking (6), decision (4), choose (4)
E.g. ““On Nov 22 last year, All Singapore Stuff website published an article with the headline “S'pore <sup>34</sup> new citizen feels cheated, now <i>wants</i> his old citizenship back”.”		

The table above shows an overview of how citizenship is talked about in the corpus based on the denotative meanings of the keywords. The themes<sup>35</sup> listed in the second column, as well as the positive/neutral/negative categorization in the first theme, are based on how I interpreted the lexical associations. Hence, the themes above should not be seen as the only way of categorizing the word associations of citizenship, given that the identification of themes can be arbitrary based on the analyst’s judgment calls. For instance,

<sup>33</sup> In this thesis, I follow orthographic conventions of Philippine English. However, my corpus data uses Singapore English orthographic conventions. I preserve this convention when I cite them as data.

<sup>34</sup> “S’pore” is commonly used as a short form of “Singapore” in Singapore. In casual contexts, “spore” is also commonly used.

<sup>35</sup> While these categories can be described and labelled in other ways (e.g. “conceptual metaphor” or “domain”), I used to word “theme” just as a general description of these categories.

one can argue that all these keywords can just be grouped into “citizenship is a political status.” However, I decided to come up with this thematic categorization to provide one way of understanding the vast collection of keywords. Hence, the categorization I provide above was based on the denotative meanings of the keywords themselves—we will, later on, see that these themes need to be problematized due to the way the keywords operated in context. Hence, the themes listed above should just be viewed as a preliminary way of approaching the lexical associations of citizenship.

The most salient observation that can be made from this table is that themes about the political and legal aspects of citizenship (i.e. the top five themes, namely: concrete object or possession, political status, regimented application system, educational topic, country-based attribute) significantly outnumber the social and everyday aspects of citizenship (i.e. the bottom three themes, namely: abstract concept, way of life, deliberation): 1135 occurrences to 108. This suggests that the political and legal aspects of citizenship in Singapore remain very salient discursively: it relates to citizenship regimes such as the citizenship application process and the inculcation of citizenship values in people’s minds, and functions as a status description of people.

The fifth theme, citizenship is a country-based attribute, involves the use of citizenship as a description of people (e.g. “Japanese national who now holds Australian citizenship,” “...Australian-born, may not have had British citizenship renounced before election...”). While, on the surface, this may seem to be neutral descriptions of the people being talked about, a more detailed analysis of the concordances and the topics where they occur suggest that they usually talk about processes of changing citizenships. Moreover, the

topics tend to be negative: for instance, citizenship is generally used as a modifier of people who are involved in negatively viewed issues, such as social and economic struggles and criminality. This can be seen in the following examples:

Table 8. Citizenship as a country-based attribute and negative topics

No	Related word	Example
1	“Mali-born”	“ <i>Mali-born</i> Singaporean Gaye Alassane is set to be stripped of his citizenship by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for his involvement in a global match-fixing syndicate...”
2	“Malaysian”	“ <i>Malaysian</i> tycoon Khoo Kay Peng had applied for a Canadian citizenship in the 1990s to avoid arrest by Singapore”
3	“Australian”	“A national service defaulter seeking <i>Australian</i> citizenship was advised by a tribunal in that country to first return to Singapore and face pending offences...”

However, there were also instances when this was used in a positive way, especially when juxtaposed with Singapore citizenship. The following are examples of this:

Table 9. Citizenship as an attribute and positive topics

No.	Related word	Example
1	“British”	“What qualities do you have that make you Singaporean? I was born here and am happy with what I have. When the British left, we could choose <i>British</i> citizenship. I'm glad my father chose to be Singaporean.”
2	“Canadian”	“...she wanted to return to Singapore to pursue music – a decision they supported. Lim, who held dual <i>citizenship</i> , gave up her <i>Canadian</i> citizenship and enrolled at the National University of Singapore...”
3	“US”	“Prof Ying, who has <i>US</i> citizenship, was hired 15 years ago to Singapore to develop the biotechnology sector and has taken on the role of Executive Director of the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology at A*STAR.”

These examples show that citizenship as a country-based attribute can be used in relation to issues which may be positively or negatively perceived.

While that is not a surprising point given that most media representations are not neutral anyway, the more important observation is how these articles tend to foreground citizenship. For the negative representations, citizenship is usually foregrounded to describe the gravity of the negativity of the issue; for instance, Example 1 in the negative examples foregrounds the issue of the revocation of Alassane's citizenship instead of the crime itself. For the positive representations, citizenship is foregrounded to highlight positive ideas about Singapore. For instance, Examples 1 and 2 are both about the positive value of choosing Singapore citizenship over others. Example 3 is a more obvious example of this—the article was about the induction of Prof Ying in the elite National Academy of Inventors of the United States, but the article somehow found a way to insert her citizenship status. While these are just a few examples, it must be emphasized that these examples were selected because they reflected the common patterns in the corpus; they are not isolated cases.

The last three themes (i.e. citizenship is an abstract concept that has various types, citizenship is a way of life, and citizenship is an issue that requires deliberation) have a significantly lower frequency count in the corpus. The keywords alone may suggest that these themes focus less on legalistic aspects and more on everyday matters that people do. However, when we analyze the concordances of these keywords—i.e. the way they were used in context—we can see that they still relate to state discourses, such as the education system, public responsibility, or national identity.

For example, “active” in Theme 6 is about “Active Citizenship,” which is part of the government curriculum on citizenship education, which I

discussed in Chapter 2. Similar examples can be found in Theme 8. Words such as “think,” “decision,” and “choose” may suggest that citizenship is an issue that people deliberate on, on their own terms. However, the concordances reveal that they come from the perspective of the government. We see this in the table below:

Table 10. Citizenship is an issue that requires deliberation

No	Related word	Example
1	“Think”	“...syllabus and examination format have been revised to place greater emphasis on promoting active citizenship and critical <i>thinking</i> ...”
2	“Decision”	“Mr Lee noted that while new citizens have spent time in Singapore and are sinking their roots in the country, taking up citizenship here is still a major life <i>decision</i> . He also quoted the late pioneer leader S Rajaratnam who said: “Being a Singaporean is not a matter of ancestry. It is conviction and choice.”
3	“Choose”	“It was surreal and perplexing to receive a letter on my 21st birthday requesting that I <i>choose</i> my citizenship before my next birthday.”

All three examples show that the words were used in relation to the state discourse on citizenship. Example 1 shows that “think” was used in the context of the state’s citizenship education program, and Example 2 shows that “decision” is something that was used in relation to government rhetoric on what citizenship is—as seen in how it was juxtaposed with the quote from S Rajaratnam. Finally, Example 3 shows that while the persona speaking was technically given a choice to “choose” citizenship, this was in relation to Singapore’s policy of making children who have two citizenships choose only one by the age of 22<sup>36</sup>. This shows that even words which suggest that

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<sup>36</sup> Singapore generally does not allow dual citizenship. Exceptions can be made for minors. For instance, a child born in the United States (and therefore becomes a US citizen because of the *jus soli* principle) may still register as a Singapore citizen by descent if s/he has a Singaporean parent. However, the child must choose which citizenship to retain before s/he reaches 21.

citizenship is an issue that requires individual deliberation still mirror the state's discourse on citizenship.

We can also observe this in Theme 7. The keywords suggest that citizenship is discussed not just as a legal status that people have, but also as an ideal that is integrated into the routine conduct of everyday life. It is part and parcel of people's character, behavior, and identity. It is an activity that relates to the lives of people and communities. However, similar to the examples above, these words are still related to the citizenship discourses of the state. We can see examples in the table below.

Table 11. Citizenship as a way of life

No	Related word	Example
1	"Character"	"Our main aim is actually to develop citizenship and <i>character</i> in our students."
2	"Behaviour"	"They should also save monetary rewards for work performance, and encourage informal rewards such as public recognition for exemplary citizenship <i>behaviour</i> ."
3	"Identity"	"The insistence on citizens' privileges is not patriotism, and reduces citizenship and <i>national identity</i> to the value of its perks, somewhat like a club membership."
4	"Life"	"...learning in our schools and tertiary institutions has to contribute purposefully to what Singaporeans make of learning, work, citizenship, and <i>life</i> ."
5	"Community"	"... to help develop in students a stronger sense of <i>community</i> and citizenship."

The table shows that "character," "life," and "community" all relate to Singapore's citizenship education program. "Behaviour" and "identity" relate to state-centric discourses on citizenship, such as a potential incentive system for good citizenship and privileges one can get out of citizenship.

How can we interpret these findings? First, even if we just look at the themes that were identified from the denotative meaning of the words, we can see that citizenship was talked about more in relation to its legal aspects or to

the state discourses on citizenship (e.g. citizenship application process, citizenship education program; Themes 1 to 5) than in relation to its different types (Theme 6) or everyday matters of living and deliberating (Themes 7 and 8). From this alone, we can already see that the representations of citizenship in the corpus tend to align with state-centric discourses that view citizenship as a political status. Second, a closer look at the lexical associations through the examples from the concordances reveals that even the themes that were supposedly less focused on the legalistic aspects of citizenship are still revolve around state-centric discourses about citizenship: Theme 6 is about types of citizenship that relate to the state's definitions of citizenship, Theme 7 is about the way of life espoused by the government, and Theme 8 is about deliberations made in accordance with citizenship policies. Both of these points show us that citizenship was talked about in the corpus in relation to state discourses of what it is. This shows that citizenship still seems to be discussed as status instead of practice (cf. Isin & Nielsen, 2008) in the corpus.

Let us continue the analysis by looking at multiword sketches that were identified by Sketch Engine as statistically significant based on their frequency in the corpus. Multiword sketches are sketches of multiword expressions, and multiword expressions are lemmas made of more than one word. For instance, “dual” occurred very frequently with “citizenship” that the software deemed it to be a statistically significant co-occurrence, and hence, could be treated as a lemma of its own that could have its own word sketch (Sketch Engine, n.d. a). This would not be the case for something like “Filipino citizenship”—it did not occur frequently enough for the software calculation system—logDice (Sketch Engine, n.d. b)—to consider it a

multiword expression in the corpus, and hence, it would not be possible to analyze its word sketch.

There are two multiword sketches related to citizenship which Sketch Engine generates: “dual citizenship” and “Singapore citizenship.” This means that “dual” and “Singapore” co-occurred with citizenship so much that their co-occurrence was deemed statistically significant. Due to the lower raw frequency of “dual citizenship” (111 occurrences, 12.04 logDice score) and “Singapore citizenship (225 occurrences, 10.01 logDice score) compared to “citizenship” (1792 occurrences), their word sketches were not as quantitatively rich as that of “citizenship.” Let us examine their lexical associations below.

### 5.2.2. Lexical Associations of Dual Citizenship

The strongest collocate of citizenship was “dual,” which forms the multiword lemma “dual citizenship.” Only two syntactic structures proved to be salient enough: verbs with “(dual) citizenship” as object and verbs with “(dual) citizenship” as subject. Even though the frequencies are low (i.e. compared to “citizenship” alone, for instance), they are still helpful in examining how “dual citizenship” was talked about in the corpus. A summary of these lexical associations can be found in the table below.

Table 12. Word sketch of "dual citizenship"

Structure	Lexical Associations
Object (66)	allow (17), hold (15), have (9), permit (2), give (2), consider (2), say (2), embrace (1), accept (1), adopt (1), recognise (1), grant (1), keep (1), offer (1), disallow (1), contend (1), reconsider (1), imagine (1), talk (1), debate (1), retain (1), carry (1), explore (1), base (1)
Subject (21)	be (10), compromise (3), have (2), become (2), dilute (1), breed (1), make (1), do (1)



The discourses about “dual citizenship” are even more restricted to its legalistic aspects more than those of “citizenship. In all its 111 occurrences in the corpus, “dual citizenship” was only used in relation to topics about Singapore immigration policy (e.g. “A perennial question is whether Singapore will allow dual citizenship”) or as a description of people’s citizenship status (e.g. “Mr Vbornov, who holds dual citizenship of Russia and St Kitts-Nevis in the Caribbean...”).

While many of the associated words are directly linked to immigration policy (e.g. “allow,” “permit,” “consider”), some words are semantically more evaluatively loaded than those of “citizenship,” such as “embrace” [e.g. “Countries have embraced dual citizenship either to connect with their large diaspora (Philippines, Italy) or integrate their immigrant population into society (Sweden, Australia), or both.”], “compromise” (e.g. “Dual citizenship compromises a person's loyalty to Singapore...”) and “dilute” (e.g. “The Government contends dual citizenship dilutes national identity...”). These suggest that “dual citizenship” may be a contentious issue that could be evaluated in the articles.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, Singapore does not allow its citizens to have dual citizenship, unless they are children who have claims to Singaporean and overseas citizenship and are awaiting the age when they would have to legally choose one citizenship over the other. This is the most likely explanation why the discourses about dual citizenship are still mostly about its legalistic aspects, since almost all these articles are either about interrogating whether Singapore should consider changing its dual citizenship laws or critiquing or celebrating the inherent nature of dual citizenship. The

occurrences of “dual citizenship” tend to be anchored on dual citizenship laws, which implies that unlike “citizenship,” talks about “dual citizenship” still revolve around legality and citizenship policies.

### 5.2.3. Lexical Associations of Singapore Citizenship

The second strongest collocate of “citizenship” is “Singapore,” which forms the multiword lemma “Singapore citizenship.” The lexical associations that it has are even fewer, and they are not significantly different from those of “citizenship” and “dual citizenship.” What is interesting about the associations of “Singapore citizenship” is that the most common associations are about the process of getting [e.g. “grant” (21), “obtain” (15), “receive” (11), “give” (7), “retain” (6), “gain” (5), “attain” (2), “acquire” (2), “offer” (2)] or losing [e.g. “renounce” (11), “relinquish” (3)] access to it. However, it is also talked about based on what it is [i.e. “be” (12)], although to a lower extent.

The “be” discourses provide a glimpse of how Singapore citizenship is talked about, despite its low frequency. The following are the 12 instances of the multiword “Singapore citizenship” + [be] in the corpus:

Table 13. “Singapore citizenship [be]”

No	Example
1	“... a living but not to sink one's roots. <i>Singapore citizenship</i> was offered to those born in Singapore or the...”
2	“...efforts must be made to ensure that <i>Singapore citizenship</i> is not just a bundle of rights and privileges...”
3	“...In the early years after 1965, <i>Singapore citizenship</i> was mainly passed on by descent...”
4	“... citizen. Each application for <i>Singapore citizenship</i> is evaluated on a range of criteria on its own...”
5	“...stems from a sense of belonging. <i>Singapore citizenship</i> is more than just a passport or document; it is...”
6	“... of at least two years) to qualify for <i>Singapore citizenship</i> is not stringent enough. Potential new...”

7	"...with their home countries. The <i>Singapore citizenship</i> is internationally and widely valued."
8	"...defend the country as their home. The <i>Singapore citizenship</i> is sacred – and it should be treated that way."
9	"... stressed that every application for <i>Singapore citizenship</i> is evaluated on a range of criteria, including..."
10	"...year, compared to 43,300 in 2003. <i>Singapore citizenship</i> was granted by descent annually to 1,100..."
11	"...an annual average of 700 <i>Singapore citizenships</i> were granted by descent to children born..."
12	"...residency and the eventual hope of <i>Singapore citizenship</i> isn't worth enough, then make it worth more."

While the table above conflates different structures (e.g. “be” as copula, “be” as auxiliary, “Singapore citizenship” as part of a larger noun phrase than the “be” verb), it still gives us an idea of how Singapore citizenship was discussed in the newspapers. Similar to “citizenship” and “dual citizenship,” the concordances above show that “Singapore citizenship” is discussed as a political status that is defined by the law (Examples 3 and 11) and is a goal that can be applied for by interested parties (Examples 4, 9, 10). The other examples show how “Singapore citizenship” relates to complaints about the application process: it can be critiqued as “not stringent enough” (Example 6) and should not be seen as just a bureaucratic achievement but as a sense of belonging (Example 5), because it is more than just “a bundle of rights and privileges” (Example 2). Two adjectives stand out for the degree of pride that they connote— “sacred” (Example 8) and “internationally and widely valued” (Example 7)—which shows that Singapore citizenship is portrayed as something that must be viewed with pride, which seems to be the justification for making citizenship requirements more stringent. There is a concession in the concordances that Singapore citizenship is an asset and is something that should be safeguarded as part of the rhetoric of what is best for

Singapore. This is a common sentiment in different public discourses in Singapore and is something that I witnessed people talk about even in casual settings when I was still living in Singapore. For instance, I noticed the same portrayal of Singapore citizenship in my interactions with Singaporeans (e.g. friends, colleagues, acquaintances).

#### 5.2.4. Analysis of Sample Text: “Citizenship” and “Singapore citizenship”

To conclude this section, I do a close analysis of one news article that was part of the corpus. My goal here is to complement the discussion with an example of how these representations work in the context of the newspaper article.

The article I analyze in this section was the source of Example 8 of the “Singapore citizenship” keyword above. This article comes from the “Voices” section of TODAY, where “letters to the editor” articles are published. This letter was written from the perspective of a newspaper reader, which provides a view of a person who does not—technically speaking—politically represent the government, unlike news articles that report speeches of government officials. However, one could also argue that because it was chosen to be published by the newspaper editors, it may potentially reflect the editors’ or the newspaper’s, perspective. Moreover, this letter may also reflect government rhetoric because Singapore newspapers tend to be closely aligned with them.

Despite its brevity, it mentions two keywords: “Singapore citizenship” and “citizenship,” which would allow us to make comparisons with the claims I have made so far based on the general patterns in the corpus

data. I put the keywords in boldface and marked the paragraphs with the paragraph symbol ¶ for easy reference.

Extract 4. Sample text: "Citizenship" and "Singapore Citizenship"

Headline	<b>Citizenship</b> should be given to immigrants who see S'pore as home
Author	Maria Socorro Tan Poh Ching
Article Details	Published: 12 August 2014 Source: TODAY Factiva Label: TDAYSG0020140811ea8c00007
<p>¶1] While it is important for a nation to ensure that its economy continues to thrive, it is even more essential for it to focus on moulding a society that firmly upholds the country's culture and values.</p> <p>¶2] Hence, the criteria for <b>citizenship</b> and permanent residency should not be biased heavily towards objective measurements of economic contributions and academic prowess, like Dr Jeremy Lim said in his commentary "Are you 'of this place'?" (May 5)<sup>37</sup>.</p> <p>¶3] Such criteria would help the country prosper economically, but they do not help build an integrated society.</p> <p>¶4] The pink identity card should be given to immigrants who think of Singapore as their home.</p> <p>¶5] No doubt it is a criterion that cannot be measured, but it should be a mandatory requirement for applicants to have resided in Singapore for at least 10 years before they can apply for <b>citizenship</b>.</p> <p>¶6] A regime that requires a series of thorough tests and interviews should also be implemented for the right candidates to be picked.</p> <p>¶7] Immigrants who are granted <b>citizenship</b> mostly based on their contributions to the economy may leave if Singapore experienced an economic downturn, as it would not continue to make any financial sense for them to stay.</p> <p>¶8] What Singapore needs are immigrants who would defend the country as their home.</p> <p>¶9] The <b>Singapore citizenship</b> is sacred — and it should be treated that way.</p>	

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<sup>37</sup> The author refers to an opinion article in TODAY published on May 5, 2014. This article can be accessed at: <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/are-you-place>.

In this article, “citizenship” occurs once in the headline and thrice in the body of the text and “Singapore citizenship” only occurs once, which is in the last paragraph of the text. It must be noted that, in this article, both keywords actually refer to the same thing: the notion of Singapore citizenship. However, their lexical associations seem to evoke different themes. Let us examine this first before we approach the main point of this article: how this article portrays new citizens in its discussion of “citizenship” and “Singapore citizenship.”

The first two occurrences of “citizenship” in the body of the article were associated with words such as “criteria,” “apply,” and “regime” that suggest that citizenship is a product of a regimented application system, which is similar to Theme 3 in Section 5.2.1. In ¶2, citizenship was also treated as a legal status—similar to Theme 2—because of its association with “permanent residency.” The occurrence was associated with both “granted,” which suggests that citizenship is a concrete object or possession (Theme 1). “Grant” occurs in ¶7, which talked about citizenship in relation to its economic aspects, as seen in “contributions to the economy,” “economic downturn,” and “financial stay.” This is consistent with what the general patterns that showed up from the corpus data suggest: “citizenship” is mostly talked about in terms of legalistic or material concerns that relate to government’s discourses on citizenship. On the other hand, “Singapore citizenship” is mostly talked about as an indisputable object of pride and respect. While “Singapore citizenship” was just mentioned once and was not talked about in as much as detail as “citizenship,” it was asserted to be “sacred.” The religious undertone of this word contrasts with the legal undertones of the words associated with

“citizenship.” In a way, the lack of explanation why “Singapore citizenship” is sacred and why “it should be treated that way” affirms the article’s regard of “Singapore citizenship” as sacrosanct: it is too important to question or change. Hence, we can see that even though “citizenship” and “Singapore citizenship” refer to the same notion, the textual representations of the keywords show us differences that are consistent with the corpus findings in the previous sections. Moreover, the lexical associations of these keywords in this text serve as a good introduction to how the text portrays new citizens and immigrants: they are portrayed as “bad” if they just orient to the legal/economic aspects of citizenship, and they are portrayed as “good” if they also orient to social aspects of citizenship such as pride. Let us unpack how this textually takes place below.

The text portrays new citizens through the “rhetoric of inclusion/exclusion” (Wodak, 2011, p. 58; cf. Van Dijk, 1984). As the headline shows, “citizenship” is treated as an object that can be “given,” which is similar to Theme 1 in Section 5.2.1. The structure of the headline shows this act of giving is selective: the giving of citizenship to “immigrants” (direct object) is qualified by the relative clause “who see S’pore as home.” This implies that there are two types of immigrants: those who see Singapore as home and those who do not—the first being portrayed as the desirable group and the second as the undesirable group. The deontic modal “should” sets this activity as what ought to be done—an intensifying strategy (Wodak, 2011, p. 63) which connects the argument (i.e. include immigrants’ outlook towards Singapore) to the conclusion (i.e. more restrictions for citizenship applicants to

not compromise the value of Singapore citizenship)—a “topos”—through the notion of “responsibility” (p. 64).

While “economy” and “society” are not mutually exclusive concerns, the article suggests that they are, most evident in ¶1. The article prescribes that one must be prioritized over the other—“upholding the country’s culture and values” over assuring that the “economy continues to thrive” (¶1). These become the basis for differentiating the two types of immigrants.

There are two juxtapositions—seemingly treated as binary oppositions—in this text:

1. “economy” (associated with “thrive,” ¶1; “prosper,” ¶3; “contributions,” ¶2 and ¶7) vs. “society” (associated with “country’s culture and values,” ¶1; “integrated,” ¶3)
2. bad immigrants/new citizens (i.e. those who do not consider Singapore home and only care about the “economic” aspects of citizenship) vs. good immigrants/new citizens (i.e. those who consider Singapore home and also care about the “societal” aspects of citizenship)

In other words, because the topic of the article is immigrants and what must be expected from them, immigrants are prominently and explicitly foregrounded in the text. The text focuses on “bad” immigrants and implies their counterpart, “good” immigrants. What seems to differentiate the two groups is how they orient to the first binary opposition: economy and society.

This seems to connect with how the “citizenship” and “Singapore citizenship” keywords were used in the text. Even though I have previously said that these keywords refer to the same notion (i.e. Singapore citizenship),



their lexical associations seem to be differentiated in a way comparable to the justifications above. Hence, we can infer that these juxtapositions (i.e. binary oppositions of economy/society and good/bad immigrant and the differentiated lexical associations of “citizenship” and “Singapore citizenship”) can result in two chains of implications:

1. bad immigrants → more oriented towards economic gain → people who just view Singapore citizenship in terms of its economic aspects (similar to the lexical associations of “citizenship”)
2. good immigrants → also oriented towards societal concerns → people who might view Singapore citizenship with veneration (similar to the lexical associations of “Singapore citizenship”)

Through this, the article was able to portray bad immigrants as people who only exploit the benefits and privileges of citizenship and PR without making a commitment to Singapore society. Hence, through the discussion of what citizenship is or should be, the article was also able to say something about groups of people. We will examine the construction of groups more in the following section, where I explore the representations of “Singapore citizen” and “new citizen” in the corpus.

### **5.3. Representations of “Citizen”: “Singapore Citizen” and “New Citizen”**

In the previous section, I discussed how lexical associations identified from the corpus formed various themes about citizenship. While this corpus just provides a snapshot of the many and changing discourses on citizenship in Singapore society, it was still able to sensitize us to how citizenship was generally talked about in public media texts. In this section, I examine how

citizenship categories are talked about in Singapore: specifically, “Singapore citizens” and “new citizens.” This achieves two major goals. First, it expands the discussion in the previous section by juxtaposing the representations of citizenship as a notion with the representations of the citizenship categories, which consequently provides a more thorough understanding of how “citizenship” is discursively constructed in the newspapers. Second, it shows similarities and differences in how citizenship categories are constructed. This reveals how citizenship categories are not just differentiated in terms of their legalistic aspects, but also in terms of how they are discussed in the newspapers, which provides us with a glimpse of how the categories are ideologically differentiated in the newspaper discourses.

#### 5.3.1. Lexical Associations of “Citizen” and “Citizens”

Given that citizenship categories, their definitions, and underpinning assumptions about their rights and obligations are explicitly spelled out in Singapore immigration law (e.g. Singapore citizen, permanent resident, student/work/dependent pass holders, foreigner), it would be worth finding out if they are defined as clearly in the newspapers. A good way of starting this analysis is to look at two keywords: “citizen” and “citizens.” There are two reasons behind this. First, these keywords are directly and lexically related to “citizenship”—the keyword discussed in the previous section. Second, “citizen” and “citizens” generate rich word sketches that are connected to the citizenship categories laid out by Singapore law. The figure below shows the visualization of the most common lexical associations of “citizen.”

"citizen" and/or...		"citizens" and/or...	
Lexical Item	Frequency	Lexical Item	Frequency
resident	571	residents	25
pr (i.e. permanent resident)	98	resident	4
student	25	pr (i.e. permanent resident)	3

singaporean	21	prs (i.e. permanent residents)	1
foreigner	17		
residents	15		
singapore	14		
non-citizen	11		
prs (i.e. permanent residents)	10		
immigrant	10		
worker	9		
spouse	8		
first-generation	6		
local	5		

There are a few things in this table that need to be clarified. First, the presence of “citizen” and “citizens” in the corpus—similar to “citizenship” in the previous section—is not surprising given that these words were part of the search string used in downloading the articles from Factiva, as discussed in Chapter 4. It should also be stressed the word sketch of “citizen” is rich in terms of the frequency of its lexical associations: for instance, there are many nouns modified by “citizen” (e.g. “population,” 87 occurrences; “birth,” 18 occurrences; “household,” 14 occurrences). The word sketch of citizenship also includes modifiers of “citizen.” The top four modifiers are “Singapore” (1377 occurrences), “new” (736 occurrences), “senior” (119 occurrences), and “Singaporean” (113 occurrences). They occur significantly more frequently than other modifiers (e.g. “US,” 23 occurrences; “more,” 33 occurrences; “dual,” 19 occurrences, “male,” 19 occurrences; “good,” 13 occurrences) that Sketch Engine also generated multiword sketches for them. In the following section, I compare the word sketches of “Singapore citizen” to “new citizen.” I exclude “senior citizen” and “Singaporean citizen” in this discussion because their word sketches are not rich enough for analysis—almost all the lexical associations just occur once. Moreover, while “senior citizen” is arguably a

citizenship category in a way, it is based on age and not on immigration or citizenship status (i.e. even foreigners can be senior citizens as long as they are 60 years old or above), which means that it is not directly related to this study.

Before I discuss the lexical associations of “Singapore citizens” and “new citizens,” I must state that these keywords are not in opposition with each other. “Singapore citizen” would technically include local-born and new citizens, after all. The analysis I present below just aims to present how the keywords were talked about in the corpus, given that they are the two most frequent multiword keywords drawn from “citizen.” These keywords evoke different portrayals of citizenship, which we see below.

### 5.3.2. Lexical Associations of “Singapore Citizens”

The following table summarizes key aspects of the “Singapore citizen” word sketch. This table consists of three major linguistic structures: modifiers of “Singapore citizen,” ‘verbs with “Singapore citizen” as object,’ and ‘verbs with “Singapore citizen” as subject.’ Because software such as Sketch Engine can make tagging mistakes, I deleted words which were mistakenly included in the word sketch. For instance, “year” (4 occurrences) was mistakenly tagged as a modifier of Singapore citizen—the structure of the sentences tagged as such was “From next year, Singapore citizens and permanent residents...”.

Table 15. Lexical Associations of "Singapore Citizen"

Modifiers of “Singapore citizen”		Verbs with “Singapore citizen” as object		Verbs with “Singapore citizen” as subject	
Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency
new	28	become	134	be	55
only	13	include	15	have	24

male	8	allow	13	live	11
eligible	7	poll	10	do	6
Malaysia-born	5	prevent	9	head	5
senior	4	naturalise	6	make	5
		involve	5	age	4
		bear	4	need	4
		comprise	4	take	4
				write	4

The lexical associations above show that “Singapore citizen” is commonly discussed with respect to rights and obligations that one can get from the political status of citizenship, which are comparable to the discussion of “citizenship” in the previous section. These can be seen in the following examples:

Table 16. Examples of rights and obligations aspects

No	Related word	Example
1	“Only”	“... <i>only</i> Singapore citizens are allowed to buy new Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats...”
2	“Become”	“As stated in their contracts, A*Star's foreign-born scholarship recipients must <i>become Singapore citizens</i> during their PhD studies.”
3	“Prevent”	“RWS was censured for failing to <i>prevent two Singapore citizens</i> from entering its casino premises without valid entry levies.”
4	“Allow”	“... <i>only Singapore citizens are allowed</i> to join the competition...”
5	“Eligible”	“...subsidises up to 90 per cent of the cost of hearing aids for <i>eligible Singapore citizens</i> .”

These words and sample concordances show that “Singapore citizen” comes with issues of access (e.g. getting subsidies, joining competitions) and restrictions (e.g. being forbidden from going into casinos without necessary permits). The relatively high frequency of “only” affirms that the “Singapore citizen” category denotes a sense of exclusivity—as seen in all 13 concordance lines—of accessing rights and privileges in Singapore. This also implies that other citizenship categories, perhaps except for “permanent

residents” because they co-occur with “Singapore citizens” in 8 out of the 13 instances, have restricted access to some of these rights and privileges.

The word sketch also illustrates that “Singapore citizen” is usually associated with the idea of being “new,” as exemplified by associated words such as “new” (28), “become” (134), and “naturalise” (6). This shows that newspapers talk about topics which explicitly relate “Singapore citizen” to the issue of new citizenship. These associations also suggest that while “Singapore citizenship” persists to be a salient political category that determines the system of rights and privileges as discussed above, it also underscores the idea that “Singapore citizen” is a category that may be gained or lost. It can also be interpreted as a goal or product of immigration processes: for instance, people can become citizens (e.g. “...movie star Jet Li, who became a Singapore citizen in 2009...”) and be naturalized and/or be denaturalized (e.g. “A 43-year-old naturalised Singapore citizen will have his Singapore citizenship revoked...”). The high frequency of “new” and “become” shows that the “Singapore citizen” is usually discussed in relation to the process of applying and/or performing it.

In the following section, I compare these observations with the lexical associations of “new citizen.” By identifying the similarities and differences of “Singapore citizen” and “new citizen,” we can better understand how these two citizenship categories are constructed in the corpus.

### 5.3.3. Lexical Associations of “New Citizen”

As I briefly mentioned above, “new citizen” was the second most common multiword sketch that Sketch Engine generated within the “citizen” keyword. The following table summarizes key aspects of its word sketch.

Table 17. Word sketch of "new citizen"

Modifiers of “new citizen”		Verbs with “new citizen” as object		Verbs with “new citizen” as subject	
Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency
Singapore	24	be	25	be	36
more	12	help	22	have	19
woman	11	include	17	come	5
many	7	urge	13	do	5
other	5	welcome	12	integrate	5
potential	3	integrate	10	live	5
pore (from “s’pore,” colloquial short form of Singapore)	3	become	7	need	5
		say	7	tend	5
		get	5	feel	4
		hope	5	assimilate	3
		assimilate	4	decide	3
		expect	4	take	3
		present	4	understand	3
		add	3		
		draw	3		
		educate	3		

This word sketch has many striking differences to the word sketch of “Singapore citizen” discussed above. The most noticeable difference is the significant decrease of words which relate to the legalistic aspects of and rights and obligations associated with citizenship, and the significant increase of words with relate to more societal issues that revolve around citizenship. For instance, in the “new citizen” word sketch, only “potential” (e.g. “Potential new citizens must demonstrate that they can and have contributed towards the well-being of Singapore - socially and economically.”) relates to the legalistic aspect of citizenship as status.



Two words—“more” (e.g. “but with preserving social harmony a priority, it is hard for the Singapore government to take in more new citizens”) and “many” (e.g. “...many new citizens chose to come here to take advantage of study, job and investment opportunities to improve their station in life”)—also allude state-centric discussions of the societal repercussions of citizenship.

Lexically speaking, “more” and “many” are quantifiers. Given that these words were not part of the lexical associations of “Singapore citizen,” it can be argued that their association to “new citizen” highlights the issue of number. Linguistic forms about number are considered by Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) as a common discursive strategy used in describing refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants (RASIM; see Chapter 3.3.1.2)—which usually evoke negative characteristics. The presence of quantifiers in the “new citizen” word sketch and its absence in the “Singapore citizen” word sketch suggest that number is a topic that only becomes relevant in discussions about new citizens.

As an object of the listed verbs, new citizens are talked about as passive recipients of actions from other stakeholders such as Singaporeans and the government instead of actors in themselves. This contrasts to the representations of “Singapore citizen” which treated “Singapore citizens” as people who possess legal rights and privileges. Based on the representations, “new citizens” should be “welcome[d],” “integrate[d],” “assimilate[d],” “help[ed],” and “educate[d].” We can see some examples below:

Table 18. “New citizens” as passive recipients of action

No	Related word	Example
1	“Welcome”	“...community leaders <i>welcome new citizens</i> and

		residents through house visits, parties and festive celebrations.”
2	“Integrate”	“...Mrs Teo gave an update on efforts to <i>integrate new citizens</i> and stay open as a society.” “...Mrs Teo gave an update on efforts to <i>integrate new citizens</i> and stay open as a society.”
3	“Assimilate”	“...for Singapore to effectually <i>assimilate new citizens</i> , the process has to start now – before the problems of assimilation and integration become entrenched.”
4	“Help”	“She is adviser to the PA Integration Council tasked to <i>help new citizens</i> and permanent residents settle into the community.”
5	“Educate”	“...MP Leon Pereira called on the Government to <i>educate new citizens</i> ...”

From the same transitivity structure, we can also draw observations about the expectations set on them by Singapore society, as shown by the occurrence of “urge” (e.g. “He urged the new citizens to defend Singapore’s way of life...”), “hoped” (e.g. “Mr Lee said he hoped the new citizens would continue to get to know Singapore better and build a better future for all.”), and “expect” (e.g. “We expect the new citizens to make the effort to integrate into our community, to commit their loyalty to Singapore.”). This, again, provides a contrast with the “Singapore citizen” lexical associations: while “Singapore citizens” are represented as people in terms of accessing rights and privileges from the government, “new citizens” are represented based on how they are supposed to be treated as members of Singapore society. They are presented as an object of careful management, a group of people who need to be guided, assimilated, educated, and transformed—despite their already acquired legal status as citizens of Singapore. These representations are about how new citizens should contribute to Singapore’s way of life and the obligations they have as new members of Singapore society. This difference

seems to propose different expectations from Singapore citizens and new citizens.

It is also worth examining the verbs associated with “new citizens” as subjects because these are what “new citizens” usually do based on the newspaper articles. Two words, “integrate” (e.g. “Mr Goh said Singaporeans also have to play their part to help new citizens integrate more easily into the community”) and “assimilate” (e.g. “These measures would undoubtedly help new citizens assimilate and integrate better...”), also occur here. However, the concordances reveal that these actions are not actively done by new citizens; rather, they are mostly effects of other verbs which other people do. While this claim cannot be definitively argued because even if these words occur frequently enough that they are included in the word sketch, their raw frequencies are rather low. This hints at the idea that the action of integrating and assimilating are expected to be enacted by other people, arguably putting new citizens in a passive position in relation to these actions.

Moreover, the nature of the verbs associated with new citizens are different from those associated with Singapore citizens. While the latter are mostly about accessing rights and privileges, the former are directly related to issues of citizenship and integration. Words such as “assimilation,” “integration,” “welcome,” and “include” prove this, not just based on their denotative meaning, but also based on their actual use in the articles: these words were all used in articles which tackled citizenship and integration topics. This affirms the earlier point I made about whether this contributes to our understanding of the who-is-supposed-to-do-what question that underpins

many studies on citizenship and integration, which was the focus of Section 2.4.

Finally, the word sketch of “new citizen” includes words that are denotatively related to mental and emotive processes, such as “decide” (e.g. “He said he hoped the new citizens decided to make Singapore their home not just for its comfortable and safe environment, but "also because you believe in Singapore and identify with what Singapore stands for...”), “understand” (e.g. “This will help new citizens understand better our customs and traditions and make it easier for them to integrate with other Singaporeans.”), and “feel” (e.g. “We need to improve our citizenship journey so that new citizens feel more strongly about what makes Singapore Singapore.”). Words like these do not occur in the “Singapore citizen” word sketch—the “Singapore citizen” word sketch was predominantly about the processes of citizenship, such as the citizenship application requirements and the benefits and entitlements that Singapore citizens can access, which means to say that its lexical associations generally revolve around the understanding of “Singapore citizen” from the perspective of the law. The occurrence of these words in the “new citizen” word sketch suggests that “new citizens” were also talked about in relation to matters of everyday affairs—ranging from activities that reflect the Singapore way of life to different mental and emotive processes. However, we can see that these words did not occur frequently: “decide” and “understand” only occurred 3 times and “feel” only occurred 4 times.

Moreover, how these words were used suggests that they still revolve around state-centric discourses: the words were used from the perspective of the state—that is, the state must do something to make new citizens “decide,”

“understand,” and “think” in a way that the state wants them to. Hence, we can argue that the representations drawn from all the keywords still revolve around legal and bureaucratic aspects of citizenship that relate to state-centric discourses on citizenship that leave little acknowledgement of the emotional or experiential aspects of citizenship—the two following chapters will explore these more.

#### 5.3.4. Analysis of Sample Text: “New Citizens”

To conclude this section, I do a close analysis of one article that was part of the corpus, similar to what I did in Section 5.2.4. I examine how “new citizens” was used in the text.

The extract below comes from a news article about statements made by a government official, Josephine Teo, in the Singapore Parliament. Example 2 in Section 5.3.3 comes from this article. In this article, “new citizens” appears eight times: once in the headline and seven times in the body.

#### Extract 5. Sample text: “New Citizens”

Headline	<b>New citizens</b> need to get involved in all aspects of local life: Josephine Teo
Author	No author listed
Article Details	Published: 13 April 2016 Source: Channel NewsAsia Factiva Label: CNEWS0020160413ec4d000rz
<p>[¶1] SINGAPORE: There were 20,815 <b>new citizens</b>, and 29,955 new Permanent Residents (PRs) in 2015, as the Government kept its “calibrated pace of immigration” said Josephine Teo, Senior Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s Office on Wednesday (Apr 13).</p> <p>[¶2] Speaking in the Committee of Supply debate in Parliament, Mrs Teo gave an update on efforts to integrate <b>new citizens</b> and stay open as a society.</p> <p>[¶3] In addition to the Singapore Citizenship Journey programme that <b>new citizens</b> have to participate in since 2011, Mrs Teo said that <b>new citizens</b> “need to get involved in all aspects of local life”. This includes: learning to</p>	

speaking local languages; interacting with their neighbours; adapting to local behavioural norms; and taking an interest in issues that concern their fellow Singaporeans. Most importantly, Mrs Teo said, **new citizens** must understand Singapore's roots as a multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

[¶4] At the same time, Singaporeans can do their part, by reaching out to **new citizens**, and staying open as a society to people of diverse backgrounds. This, according to Mrs Teo, goes hand-in-hand with being a society that is open to new ideas and innovation; that is capable of positive change and has the capacity for excellence.

[¶5] The Government supports ground-up initiatives to keep Singapore an open society, said Mrs Teo. For example, since 2009, the Community Integration Fund has disbursed S\$13 million to over 660 projects by about 270 organisations.

[¶6] But even with the addition of **new citizens** and PRs, Mrs Teo noted that the population does not fully meet Singapore's growing workforce needs.

[¶7] "However, instead of growing our population more quickly, we have decided to press on with the restructuring of our economy towards one that is less dependent on manpower for growth," she explained, adding that as a result, the growth of Singapore's foreign workforce has slowed considerably.

[¶8] Mrs Teo noted that measures to ease the labour crunch for businesses had been earlier announced by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat and Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say.

The first occurrence of "new citizens" is in the headline of the article. This position is important because headlines are the most foregrounded part of news articles: it serves as the title of the article. Headlines, along with the lead (i.e. the first paragraph of news articles), are considered summaries of news articles: they are viewed as the most important parts of news articles due to the latter's "inverted pyramid" structure (Pöttker, 2003, p. 502). Hence, headlines are "often the first opportunities for news writers to communicate specific ideologies to the readers" (Li, 2010, p. 3447; cf. Bell, 1991).

In this headline, "new citizens" was followed by the deontic modal auxiliary "need to," which expresses a sense of obligation and necessity. In

this case, that necessity is for new citizens to “get involved in all aspects of local life.” While “new citizens” is portrayed as an agent of the “material process” (Halliday, 1994) of getting involved, it was intervened by the deontic modal auxiliary “need to,” which suggests that they have not done this material process yet and they ought to start doing so. Moreover, this responsibility is accentuated by “all,” which implies that getting involved in some aspects of local life would not be enough to fulfill this responsibility. This structure is consistent with Van Dijk’s (1991) description of how minority groups are portrayed in headlines: when minority groups are foregrounded in headlines, they tend to be followed by negative predicates. While the predicate here is not as negative as Van Dijk’s examples (such as predicates about crimes), the implication of the statement can still be construed negative by implication: the implied statement that they have not yet done what is expected of them, which is to get involved in all aspects of local life.

While the headline frames what new citizens ought to do as the summary of the article, the lead provides information on who Josephine Teo is, what she said, where she said it, and when. Before the lead does this, it mentions “new citizens.” The occurrence of “new citizens” in this paragraph is preceded by the number “20,815”—the exact number of new citizens that Teo provides. By virtue of it being in the lead, the quantification (cf. Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008) of new citizens is foregrounded. This is later on reinforced by the word “addition” in ¶6. Instead of elaborating the information stated in the headline, this lead introduces the topic of “number” instead. Because of this, the quantification of new citizens is made prominent in the most important

paragraph of the news article (cf. Pöttker, 2003, p. 502), instead of how they are supposed to be involved in local life, which was foregrounded in the headline.

The four remaining occurrences of “new citizens” are in ¶2-4. In ¶2, “new citizens” is the direct object of “integrate,” which is an infinitive phrase that follows “efforts,” which are presumably made by the Singapore government. This is comparable to the findings I made in 5.4.2: new citizens tend to be passive recipients of verbs that indicate material processes. Representing “new citizens” as passive recipients of material actions from other stakeholders in Singapore society can also be seen in ¶4.

“New citizens” most frequently appeared in ¶3. In this part, “new citizens” was all followed by deontic statements through modals (“must understand Singapore’s roots”) and modal auxiliaries (“have to participate in [SCJ]” and “need to get involved in all aspects of life). These can be considered further explications of what is in the headline of the article. How they should “get involved” is now explained: they are expected to do material processes (“learning,” “interacting,” “adapting”) and mental (“take an interest”) processes. Again, this evokes a sense of responsibility from new citizens: in this case, they are expected to both do material and mental processes. Furthermore, these processes are all oriented towards Singapore or its people. Hence, we can see that when “new citizens” are agents of actions, albeit indirectly through the intervention of modals, they are in the context of doing it for Singapore or its people. This is consistent with the corpus findings: while “new citizens” co-occurs with words that are less about



legalistic aspects of citizenship as status, it still generally co-occurs with words that relate to state-centric discourses on citizenship.

#### **5.4. A Metapragmatic Interpretation**

I now further unpack how these representations relate to the discursive construction of citizenship by focusing on how these representations can be seen as signs that signify the notions of citizenship and citizenship categories. In this section, I explain how the metapragmatic approach can help us further make sense of the findings in two ways: how it allows us to understand how linguistic patterns work as signs and how these signs relate to each other.

##### **5.4.1. How Signs Work**

The discussion in Section 5.3. shows that linguistic patterns such as lexical associations portray citizenship categories, such as “Singapore citizen” and “new citizen,” in particular ways: “citizen” was discussed in relation to other citizenship categories (e.g. permanent residents), “Singapore citizen” was tackled in relation to rights and obligations, and “new citizen” was portrayed as a category that is an object of state management and action.

Because these linguistic patterns form a connection between what was in the text and themes or impressions that we may develop about the keywords they are associated with, we can consider them as signs. They have a contiguous relationship with the citizenship categories they signify. The frequency of these patterns show that this indexical connection seems to be dominant in the text: it suggests that the indexical connection may have been

made in the individual articles, and the corpus—the collection of these articles—reveals the extent of how much they were used in the articles.

Agha's (2007) concepts of "designators" (p. 243) and "diacritics" (p.248) can help us further interpret the findings in this chapter. Citizenship categories are clearly status designators: they are words (specifically, nouns) that refer to a group of people that are part of a "social system" or "social structure." Because Agha (2007) argues that "role and status categories are of little significance to social relations unless linked to emblems, that is, to perceivable behaviors that index social personae (which role/status designators can be used to denote)" (p. 244; parentheses in original), it would be important to examine how these designators were denoted in the texts. This is when the representations identified in this chapter become more relevant: they serve as emblematic diacritics—indexes that "functions in interaction to differentiate one social kind of actor from others, or one role from another") that index social personae. While these lexical associations are less observable than other examples of diacritics that Agha discusses such as clothing, behavior, appearance, etc., they function similarly because they also assign certain traits or attributes to the social groups that the citizenship-based categories stand for, albeit more implicitly. For instance, the designation of the "Singapore citizen" tends to be constructed through the use of diacritics which mostly revolve around positive topics, or around the benefits and/or activities that they supposedly partake on an everyday and banal level—most of which focus on the "Singapore citizen" himself as an individual who lives his life in Singapore. On the other hand, the designation of the "new citizen" was mostly constructed through diacritics (linguistic patterns) that index a persona of

someone who is a passive recipient of state action, an object of state management, and someone who may consider emotive or experiential aspects of citizenship within the purview of statal citizenship discourses.

The dominance of these linguistic patterns can be seen as a manifestation of the salience of such indexicalities. Because the corpus is a collection of individual articles, we can say that these indexicalities are not just one-off cases that just apply to one article. Rather, we see them in different articles, even though they may have different topics. For instance, the “Singapore citizen” → rights and obligations indexicality manifests itself in articles which have very different topics, such as hearing aids, PhD scholarships, or casinos. This shows that while the diacritics may not be very explicit in form, they can still viably represent citizenship categories because of their presence in many articles about a variety of topics. Moreover, the salience of the differences between how designators are constructed (e.g. “Singapore citizen” and “new citizen”) show that even though the designators may be the same in linguistic form (e.g. they are lexical associations or transitivity patterns), they may generate different “extrasemantic meaning” (Urban, 2006; cf. Silverstein, 1993), which demonstrates the dynamic nature of these indexes.

We can see that the differences between the diacritics of “Singapore citizen” and of “new citizen,” for example, can help construct two different types of personas even though, as I said earlier, “Singapore citizen” may include “new citizens” too because new citizens are technically Singapore citizens too. However, the representations of these keywords construct two different personas: while “Singapore citizen” is talked about as an individual

who lives in Singapore and relates to rights and obligations, the “new citizen” is talked about not just as an individual, but as a member of Singapore society, who is an object of the management of the immigration issues in Singapore. The differences of these diacritics have a concomitant effect on the constructed designators, which show that even though “citizen/s” may blur the lines between different citizenship categories, they can be highlighted as well. These may have an impact on how the recipients of these discourses understand the different citizenship-based categories, even though some of the differences are admittedly not very conspicuous on the surface. In other words, the differences between the representations of the different citizenship-based categories can potentially contribute to the reaffirmation of the supposed differences of the groups that they stand for.

#### 5.4.2. How Signs Relate to Each Other

Let us begin this discussion by looking at the representations of “new citizen.” We see that the representations of “new citizen” tend to come from articles which are explicitly about “new citizen.” For instance, the sample text in Section 5.3.4 is explicitly about new citizens and what they ought to do. Hence, the representations were explicitly framed (cf. Gal, 2016) not just as about the “new citizen” keyword but as about the actual new citizens. This shows that the different signs and their indexical functions are framed and typified as about (new) citizenship, which seems to cluster together as the field of indexicality (Jaffe, 2016) of “new citizens,” which is subsumed under the metasign of citizenship. We see that citizenship is a metasign (Gal, 2016; Agha, 2007): it provides a framing (i.e. reflexive establishment of citizenship

as topic) for the interpretation (i.e. these are about citizenship) of how various indexes (e.g. quantifiers, association with mental/material processes, transitivity patterns) can be considered similar enough (i.e. typified within a semiotic range) in terms of how they can cluster together (i.e. field of indexicality) to refer to itself (i.e. citizenship). Hence, the portrayal of new citizens in the corpus and in the sample text may have a much stronger indexical capacity to influence how actual new citizens may be imagined—as passive recipients of actions from other members of Singapore society (e.g. they must be educated, integrated, helped, assimilated, etc.) and must incorporate state-centric narratives in the actions that they do (e.g. how they decide or feel).

While the framing of the representations of other keywords such as “Singapore citizen” (discussed in relation to a variety of topics such as hearing aids) or “citizenship” (while mostly discussed in relation to the political status that is citizenship, it was also discussed in relation to topics which may not be about citizenship per se, such as when it was used as an attribute) may be less explicit than the framing of the representations of “new citizens,” their coexistence in these articles suggests that they may all be members of the constellation of signs that can signify citizenship categories, and consequently, of the notion of citizenship as a whole. After all, the keywords, and not just the topic of the articles, also frame their associations as about them. Because of this, these representations across all keywords could be read as part of the same cluster—the same field of indexicality of the metasign of citizenship. This chapter shows that even though the field of indexicality of citizenship consists of various resources (i.e. linguistic forms) that may have varying

degrees of contiguity (i.e. some are more explicitly framed than others), they still become associated with a common object—citizenship—as it was portrayed in the texts.

However, the meaning of citizenship cannot be “empirically confirmable” (Jaffe, 2016) based on the texts alone; rather, it needs to be explored in relation to people who perceive, and/or are subjected to, such representations. People’s emotions, behaviors, and consciousness may influence how they view citizenship. For instance, the findings in this chapter (Section 5.3.4.) seem to suggest that people’s thoughts and feelings must be understood in relation to how they are supposed to align with statal discourses on citizenship. This leads us to a few questions: is this really the case? Are they always aligned? Can people talk about citizenship in relation to their thoughts and feelings more than to statal narratives such as rights and obligations? Given that the findings in this chapter hint at the possibility that emotional and experiential aspects of citizenship may be part of the discursive construction of citizenship in the corpus—even though they may have occurred way less than the political, legalistic, bureaucratic, or state-centric aspects of citizenship—it would be important to find out whether what really matters to the people in Singapore, such as the new citizens themselves. Hence, this study examines the perspective of new citizens in order to find out what (new) citizenship means to the people who actually grapple with issues related to it in their everyday affairs.

## 5.5. Conclusion

This chapter sensitized us to how citizenship and citizenship categories were talked about in public media texts by focusing on a corpus that was built for this study. The analysis was conducted by examining lexical associations of keywords, identifying themes that can be deduced from the lexical associations, and transitivity patterns. By doing so, I was able to present an overview of how the citizenship and citizenship categories were talked about in the corpus.

Let us summarize the key findings below:

1. “Citizenship”: I identified eight themes based on the denotative meaning of the keywords related to “citizenship.” The themes about legal aspects of citizenship as a status outnumber the themes about the emotive or deliberative themes. However, a closer look at how keywords that suggest emotive or deliberative themes were used in context reveals that the keywords still revolve around state discourses on citizenship. This shows that “citizenship” was generally talked about as a political status that is tied to the affairs of the state.
2. “Dual citizenship” and “Singapore citizenship”: “Dual citizenship” was mostly talked about in relation to Singapore’s immigration and citizenship policy. “Singapore citizenship” was represented as a political status that can be gained or lost and as a status that must be valued.
3. “Citizen”: The “citizen” keyword occurred with other citizenship categories (e.g. permanent resident). Within this keyword, through

modifiers, other citizenship categories were identified too. The two most frequently occurring modifiers were “new” and “Singapore”.

4. “Singapore citizens”: This keyword was generally talked about in relation to issues of rights and obligations.
5. “New citizens”: This keyword had fewer lexical associations that relate to citizenship regimes—examples of which were “potential” and quantifiers. This category was represented as an object of state management—for instance, they must be “integrated,” “assimilated,” “educated.” This keyword co-occurred with words that seem less connected with citizenship regimes (e.g. “understand,” “decide,” “feel”). However, examples from the concordances reveal that these are still very much aligned with state-centric discourses or policies.
6. Sample Text 1: While “citizenship” and “Singapore citizenship” refer to the same notion in this article, the keywords had contrasting lexical associations. “Citizenship” co-occurred with words that relate to citizenship regimes, while “Singapore citizenship” was associated with veneration. Two binary oppositions were constructed in the article: economy vs. society and good vs. bad immigrant/new citizen.
7. Sample Text 2: The lexical associations of “new citizens” included quantifiers, which emphasized the topic of number and deontic modals and modal auxiliaries, which evoked a sense of responsibility. The transitivity patterns of the text show that “new citizens” was a recipient of material actions from other agents. The



material processes attributed to new citizens were part of what are expected of them, which asserts that new citizens must do these actions.

In this chapter, we saw that the linguistic patterns did not just form textual relations with the keywords: they evoked certain ways of how to understand not just the keywords themselves, but also, the objects that they stand for—the notions of citizenship and citizenship categories. The findings in this chapter show that citizenship and citizenship categories were frequently talked about in relation to the state’s discourses on citizenship (e.g. citizenship application process, dual citizenship debate, rights and obligations, management of diversity), and this tends to treat citizenship as a political and legal status. Even the lexical associations which hint at the deliberative or emotive aspects of citizenship (e.g. representations in the “new citizens” keyword)—which were significantly lower than the other aspects of citizenship—tend to be linked to these state-centric discourses. However, even though the frequency of words that relate to emotional or experiential aspects of citizenship were very low, and even if they tend to revolve around state-centric discourses, the fact that they still surfaced in the word sketches shows that there may be some space in public media texts to talk about citizenship beyond its legal aspects. The alignment of Singapore newspapers with the discourses of the state may have influenced how citizenship and citizenship categories were discussed in the corpus.

The metapragmatic approach helped us understand how these representations served as signs that indexed citizenship and citizenship categories, through the discussion of diacritics, fields of indexicality, and

metasign. Through the metapragmatic interpretation, this chapter came up with an account of the semiotic process that happened in the texts: how signs indexed citizenship. However, as I said in Section 5.4 (and in Chapter 3), it is important to pay attention to people's uptake of discourses around them: they may affirm, contest, or negotiate public discourses based on their own conceptualizations of citizenship. Whether the representations identified in this chapter are taken up by the very people (i.e. new citizens) who actually experience processes of differentiation on an everyday level or not needs to be investigated in order to make a more convincing claim about how representations contribute to our understanding of citizenship and citizenship categories. This is why it is important to bridge the gap between the discourses of public media texts and the accounts of emotions and lived experiences of people to see how they relate to the representations in public media texts, and how they help us understand the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore. After all, new citizens may come up with other signs, which may be new or reconfigured versions of signs identified here, to position themselves in relation to the notion of citizenship and their status as new citizens. In other words, they may expand the fields of indexicality of citizenship.

This chapter serves as a good springboard for our analysis of how people in Singapore talk about citizenship and citizenship categories, which we will examine in the next two chapters. These two chapters will explore new citizens' articulations of citizenship as they are embedded in their accounts of emotion and lived experiences to understand how they affirm, contest, or reconfigure the indexicalities of discourses around them.

## **Chapter 6**

### **New Citizenship and the Negotiation of the Local and the Global**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

While the previous chapter discussed the representations of citizenship and citizenship categories in Singapore newspapers as a sensitizing overview of the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore, this chapter focuses on articulations of citizenship by new citizens. Given that the previous chapter gives us a glimpse of how citizenship and citizenship categories are represented in Singapore public media texts, this chapter examines the interview data in order to have a more nuanced analysis of how new citizens themselves talked about their own experiences as new citizens of Singapore. As I discussed in Chapter 3, studies on representations of people (e.g. RASIM) could be enriched by examining the uptake of these people; after all, people are not mere passive recipients of the discourses around them. Hence, this chapter continues the discussion in Chapter 5 by investigating the narratives of new citizens. By doing so, we can better understand how the representations of citizenship and citizenship categories, especially the new citizen, in the public media texts are affirmed, challenged, or negotiated by the new citizens themselves.

While it can be said that all members of Singapore society experience citizenship-based issues, new citizens are in a significantly different position in the immigration scenario in Singapore: they have rich immigration histories which were influenced by the various circumstances, considerations, and choices that they had or made as they embarked on their journey to Singapore

citizenship. That they had already endured and completed the citizenship application process—one of the most explicit and regimented exposures that one can have with immigration policies—yet continue to face social issues because of the status that they earned puts them in a social position where citizenship remains a salient concern. In addition to the relative recency of their becoming citizens, their transnational connections and visible racial and linguistic differences from local-born Singaporeans also make the issue of citizenship more salient for them. Hence, it is important to examine what they think of the notion of citizenship. Their recollections of their journey of acquiring Singapore citizenship vis-à-vis their current lived experiences can shed light into the issues that they face, which provide a contextualized view of how the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore directly affects the lives of the people who are in the center of these issues. In other words, while citizenship may still be predominantly construed as a political category or an immigration status by public discourses or government policies, it does not preclude the possibility of being negotiated or reconfigured by new citizens.

In this chapter, I discuss how new citizens talk about citizenship by examining interviews which I conducted with my participants (see Chapter 4 for details about the interviews). The analysis in this chapter is premised on the idea that interview narratives can provide us with insights into how my participants perceive and negotiate the notion of citizenship. These interview narratives contain accounts of lived experiences and emotions about moments when my participants claimed to have encountered the notion of citizenship in their everyday lives. This shows that my participants' articulations of

citizenship are interwoven with their accounts of the lived experiences and emotions they had as new citizens of Singapore. Hence, accounts of lived experience and emotions show us how my participants view citizenship: the experiences and emotions that they talked about or foregrounded in their interview narratives relate to how they presented themselves as new citizens during the interviews. These accounts, I argue, tend to not be sufficiently represented in public media texts which generally reflect dominant state narratives about citizenship in Singapore, as discussed in Chapter 5, and not the perspective of the new citizens themselves.

To illustrate this, in this chapter I focus on two topics that recurrently emerged in the interview data: family relations and passports. These topics are useful in demonstrating the participants' negotiation of the notion of citizenship because of the following reasons. First, my participants' accounts of how they managed family relations in Singapore and other countries portray them as new citizens who are rooted in Singapore society despite their global ties. Second, their accounts of their experiences and emotions concerning passports enable them to present themselves as citizens who are mobile while remaining rooted in Singapore. Hence, how my participants weaved these topics into their narratives becomes a useful window for studying how they negotiated their position as new citizens during their interview with me, presenting themselves as located at the tension between rootedness and mobility, thereby contesting the binary opposition between the local and the global that is often assumed in the state discourses on citizenship in Singapore (e.g. Tan & Yeoh, 2006; Yeoh, 2013; see Chapter 2.4).

These accounts shed light on our understanding of citizenship in Singapore. They reflect people's understanding of citizenship and the material conditions around them in Singapore society. For instance, statal narratives about citizenship tend to revolve around topics like the global/local and rootedness/mobility—an example of this can be seen in the Population White Paper discussed in Chapter 1. Hence, seeing how such topics occur in interview narratives that are based on actual lived experiences of new citizens can help us better understand how these concepts work in the lives of new citizens. This would provide a more nuanced perspective on the relationship of these concepts to citizenship. In the following section, I provide more details about the prominence of the global/local in Singapore society. This serves as a foundation of the analysis that I do in this chapter.

## **6.2. The Global, The Local, and Singapore Citizenship**

In Chapter 2.4, I provided a review of the literature on migration and citizenship in Singapore. Before I proceed to the analysis in this chapter, I first provide a recap of several important points from this literature review. One point that undergirds these studies is the global-local dichotomy. From studies that discuss the definition of a good citizen (Chapter 2.4.1.2) and the attitudes and identities of transmigrants (Chapter 2.4.2.2), the literature argue that a tension between the global and the local, imagined as two opposing forces, permeates how citizenship is talked about in Singapore. This common denominator stems from how the literature describe Singapore: a young country that is still struggling to come up with the “Singapore identity” that

simultaneously aspires to make its mark in the global sphere by becoming a global city-state (cf. Ho, 2006).

This idea can be seen in the rhetoric of the government on citizenship and migration, which is mirrored by public discourses in Singapore. While this dichotomy between the local and the global has been employed in discourses on local-born Singaporeans and new citizens alike, there is a primary distinction between the two. For local-born Singaporeans, the rhetoric suggests that it is acceptable for Singaporeans to be either global or local, which is encapsulated by the “heartlander-cosmopolitan” (Goh, 1999) distinction because their synergy is what makes Singapore function as it is. While other studies show that local-born Singaporeans can indeed be both (e.g. Alsagoff, 2010), the pressure to be both seems greater for new citizens because of potential social repercussions, such as their being othered as non-Singaporeans. Indeed, for new citizens, the rhetoric seems to suggest that they have to be both. One example of this is the late MM Lee’s (2007; cited in Yeoh, 2013, p.100) metaphor of Singapore as a hard drive and foreign talent (including new citizens) as valuable additional megabytes. This metaphor is premised on the idea that the international background of foreign talent can “add to the dynamism” of Singapore society, which means that the “computer never hangs because you got enormous storage capacity” (see Section 2.4.2.1). The metaphor of the hard drive entails compatibility: the additional megabytes must be integrated properly into the hard drive. Following this metaphor, foreign talent should ensure that their international backgrounds (“global”) are consistent with and properly integrated with the Singapore system (“local”).

In another speech, PM Lee (1997) talks about not just “foreign talent” but also new citizens. He argued that while local-born Singaporeans may take their state ideologies (e.g. pragmatism, meritocracy, multiculturalism) for granted because they are used to them, it should not be the case for “new citizens, who come with fresh direct experience of very different societies” (p.6). He argues that new citizens must be taught to espouse these ideologies because they come from different societies.

The relationship of the transnational backgrounds of new citizens with Singapore citizenship has been a subject of many studies (see Section 2.4.2). For instance, Montsion’s (2012) notion of “un/desirability” is based on how people use their capacity to transit between their foreign and domestic, global and local, or even Western and Eastern backgrounds for the betterment of Singapore. Additionally, Lam and Yeoh’s (2004) description of transmigrants as people who exhibit “simultaneous embeddedness” in their negotiations of “home” and “identity” show that transmigrants are expected to balance their personal backgrounds with the interests of Singapore (p. 157). Tan and Yeoh (2006) add that “...the Singaporean ideal of cosmopolitanism seems to include both the cosmopolitan and the nationalist existing together symbiotically, combining a global, yet local, outlook in life” (p.151). Therefore, the global-local interface is central to the imagination of citizenship in Singapore.

With this backdrop, how then does this chapter participate in this academic conversation? It does so by showing how the global-local interface manifests itself in my participants’ articulations of citizenship. While the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 present us with accounts of how this happens, they do not focus on how such interface is negotiated by new citizens



themselves, such as when they talk about themselves and their citizenship journeys in the context of the interview. Hence, in this chapter, I demonstrate how the local and the global are semiotically indexed by my participants in their articulations of citizenship during the interview to present themselves as new citizens who can effectively negotiate the global and the local. I do this by focusing on how my participants used the signs of family and passports to index their simultaneous occupation of positions of rootedness in Singapore and transnational mobility. I also show that while such negotiation inevitably reflects the narratives of the state and other public discourses in Singapore, it also depicts how my participants make sense of the global and the local, through their emotions and accounts of lived experiences, on their own terms. This allows them to claim status as new citizens who can contest the global/local tension. This contributes to our understanding of the discursive construction of citizenship by showing how new citizens, in their narratives, can negotiate dominant discourses on citizenship in Singapore society.

### **6.3. Family, Rootedness, and Localness**

In this section, I illustrate how my participants used the sign of family to index their rootedness. I do this by first providing an overview of how families were talked about in the interviews to describe how it surfaced as a salient theme. I then show two ways of how my participants portrayed their families in the interviews: as inspiration and as a source of exasperation. Within these portrayals, my participants were able to make claims about rootedness in Singapore. These portrayals reflect accounts of positive and negative emotions and how my participants dealt with such emotions as they

claimed rootedness despite having transnational backgrounds—thus contesting the binary oppositions of the global and the local. Before we proceed to this analysis, I first provide a brief discussion on the general patterns of how families were talked about during the interviews. This describes why I thought treating family as a theme in this chapter was warranted.

#### 6.3.1. Family Relations as a Theme

In Chapter 4, I introduced my participants and provided an overview of their immigration decisions. All the interviews (18/18) included discussions about the family relationships that my participants had. Out of all my participants, only three participants (Chad, Nigel, and Yarn) claimed that they did not directly consider their families when they were making their decisions.

While all my respondents talked about the roles that their families played in their decision to take up Singapore citizenship, their descriptions of families varied. While all my participants mostly talked about their nuclear families, some of them (e.g. Joanna, Mandy, Jenny) also talked about their extended families. While this section deals with “family” in general, whether it pertains to nuclear or extended families will be flagged when relevant.

I only explicitly asked my participants about their families during the initial stages of the interview, when I was probing into their personal backgrounds and demographic information. The most common question I asked was “Are your family members Singapore citizens too?”. This, of course, generated follow up questions depending on their responses. Other than this, I did not explicitly ask about their families anymore—except for Arthur and Jose, the brothers of Mandy and Joanna, respectively. I had already

interviewed Mandy and Joanna before I met Arthur and Jose. All my other participants still talked about their family relations without any further explicit prompts from me.

According to my participants, families played many roles in their citizenship journeys. First, their families played a role in their decision-making process by facilitating the citizenship application (e.g. submitting the application for them) or by serving as their motivation to do so (e.g. applying so that they can get benefits). Second, their discussions about families involved nuances about their emotions or feelings, which had a role in their recollection of their experiences about citizenship. Third, their families played a role in terms of how they talked about the effects of their citizenship journeys on their lives, which contributed to their assessments or evaluations of citizenship-related topics or experiences.

Now that we have a sense of how families emerged as a recurrent topic in the interviews, we can move on to the analysis of how this relates to citizenship.

### 6.3.2. Portrayals of Familial Relations and Concerns

In the interviews, my participants portrayed their familial relations and concerns in two ways: family as inspiration and family as a source of anxiety.

#### *6.3.2.1. Family as Inspiration*

As I said in the introduction of this section, my participants were able to make claims of their rootedness in Singapore within their portrayals of their family relations in their interview narratives. In this section, I give examples

from three participants: Soraya, Mario, and Sophia. Their narratives are good examples of how the portrayal of families as inspiration serves as a way for them to claim rootedness in Singapore despite having transnational backgrounds and ties. I first present empirical descriptions and analysis of these narratives. At the end of the section, I discuss how the metapragmatic approach can help us extend the analysis by examining how my participants' use of family as a sign relates to our understanding of the discursive construction of citizenship.

### Soraya

Soraya's narrative about her experiences that led to her decision to apply for Singapore citizenship was anchored on uncertainty and her quest for a sense of permanence. She was originally from Sri Lanka and she moved to Singapore when she was 15 for primarily for educational reasons. When she was in university, she met an American exchange student, Michael<sup>38</sup>, through a mutual friend in her university dormitory; they started dating three weeks before the end of the semester. They decided to end the relationship because Michael had to go back to the US. However, before going back to the US, he went on a backpacking trip in Asia and invited her to join him. She did, and they got back together.

This resulted in many questions about the certainty, stability, and sustainability of their relationship. Geographical challenges were imminent: while Soraya had finished her degree at that time, Michael still needed to finish his in the US. Because of this, Michael suggested that they get married

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<sup>38</sup> Pseudonym.

so that they can both easily move to the US together. With the approval of her parents, Soraya visited and lived with him in the US for a few months. It was during this time when they realized that while their relationship commenced with concerns about uncertainty and transience, they were serious about the idea of getting married. These issues became overtaken by their commitment to making their relationship work—a strong desire to subvert geographical and immigration concerns so that they could have a relationship set up that was more certain, permanent, and sustainable.

However, these strong feelings were tempered with economic concerns: their parents advised them to delay the wedding so that they can first advance in their careers and save money in the process. Soraya also had to serve a bond in Singapore because of the financial subsidies that she received when she was an undergraduate—violating this bond agreement meant that Soraya would have to pay the university approximately S\$80,000. She believed that violating the bond agreement was unwise; she said, “Why would we do that? “We’re gonna get a job anyway, why not just get it in Singapore?” This was one of the biggest catalysts that made them want to go back to Singapore—a concern about economic costs that opened their eyes to the possibility of settling in Singapore instead of the US.

She eventually moved back to Singapore and took up various full-time jobs, and Michael did the same thing a few months after. I asked her why she decided to apply for citizenship: she was already a PR and Michael had an employment pass at that time, which meant they could both stay in Singapore.

Soraya said that they wanted to buy an HDB<sup>39</sup> (Housing Development Board) flat and that they wanted “security here, security that we could be together” while she fulfills her service obligation and builds a life with Michael in Singapore.

Let me unpack what this narrative can tell us about how Soraya presents herself as a new citizen who has negotiated the global and the local. While Soraya explicitly states that it was mostly the economic reasons of being able to serve her bond and applying for a public flat that triggered her decision to change her citizenship, she also talks about her emotions, such as love and the desire for a stable future, which demonstrates the co-constitutiveness of the significance attributed to material benefits and affect in Soraya’s narrative. While Soraya acknowledges the importance of material benefits (e.g. paying the bond, getting a job, buying a house) of citizenship, she talks about them in relation to her emotions, such as her strong refusal to pay for her bond or her love for Michael. Statements such as “security that we could be together” show this. While she undeniably financially benefited from her decision to get citizenship, she also framed her choice in terms of her desire for stability, permanence, and sustainability. After the interview, when we were just casually catching up as friends, I remarked and said that I was

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<sup>39</sup> In Singapore, it is very common for people to use “HDB” to refer to flats owned by the Housing Development Board (HDB), the government office that takes charge of public housing concerns. According to the HDB guidelines, “a new HDB flat is subsidized and meant for Singapore Citizens” (Housing Development Board, n.d. a). For instance, a married couple can only buy an HDB flat if at least one of them is a Singapore citizen. If the husband or wife is not a Singapore citizen, he or she should be a PR for them to be eligible to buy an HDB flat. Married couples who are both PRs are only eligible to buy an HDB resale flat and not a new one (Housing Development Board, n.d. b). Singapore citizens generally get more housing subsidies than PRs.

surprised because I had not known about that aspect of her life before. She replied, as I wrote in my fieldnotes, “yes, the things I did for love.”

Soraya’s case shows that “love” and the idea of physical togetherness served as a major issue in her deliberation about becoming a Singapore citizen. What needs to be highlighted here is how she talked about her journey towards applying for Singapore citizenship. She highlights the global aspects of herself (as an immigrant from Sri Lanka), Michael (as an American exchange student and as a backpacker), and their relationship (as a commitment that endured their geographical movements). While she claims that they could have found jobs elsewhere because they are cosmopolitan citizens, she said that they picked Singapore so that she could also avoid her bond. While her choices were clearly economically calculated, she foregrounds what such calculations mean to her and her relationship with Michael. While terms she used in the interview such as “security” and “stability” could apply to material benefits, Soraya associates them with her feelings for Michael. For Soraya, Singapore citizenship represented the reconciliation of their family’s global background and the local benefits they can get from Singapore—which consists of financial reasons and emotional considerations. She makes it seem that she and Michael were motivated not just by financial reasons but also by how they imagine settling in Singapore would be compatible with how they create their future together. She said that because Singapore was compatible with their transnational backgrounds and the transnational nature of their relationship, it made them want to settle in Singapore. She also said that because Singapore provided them with a solution to their transnational challenges, they now feel very thankful for Singapore

and they try their best to “give back,” such as by raising the daughter they now have not as a “third-culture kid,” but as a “Singaporean.”

We can see how Soraya’s narrative presents her as someone who orients to the local—they want to “give back” and they want to raise their child as a Singaporean. This was a result of her grappling with the transnational challenges of her relationship with Michael. Hence, while her narrative foregrounds the transnational aspects of her life, she was able to link it to how they developed a desire to give back and to raise their child as a Singaporean. This shows us that Soraya presents herself as someone who, despite having a long history of orienting to the global, has decided to form roots in Singapore.

My participants who had children all had narratives which were comparable to Soraya’s, even though it was not about making a romantic relationship work. One example of this is Mario, whose recollection of his citizenship change process seems to be anchored on his sense of sacrifice and responsibility driven by his love for his family.

### Mario

Mario said that he and his family were flexible about where they wanted to live permanently—a point that Soraya also made. They tried Turkey first, where he was originally from. However, he said that living in Turkey proved to be difficult for his wife, who was Singaporean Chinese. He said, “She cannot communicate in any form. She cannot read any signboards, so she considered herself mute there and blank”. They then tried to move to Hong Kong because he had the opportunity to work for a major airline there but it



became difficult for him because he “...cannot communicate with the people. Because majority in Hong Kong doesn’t really speak English.” Because of the linguistic and cultural differences that they both faced in these two places, they decided that Singapore was the best option—his wife is Singaporean and he considered Singaporeans to speak English more effectively than the people of Hong Kong. In addition to this, he had found a job he liked in a multinational corporation in Singapore. He also mentioned that Singapore’s educational system would be good for his children. He briefly talked about the struggles that he had to face in the past, such as the difficulty of getting non-Turkish or non-Central Asian citizens to respect his Turkish degree. He said he did not want this to happen to his children, which is why he thought that the Singapore educational system was ideal because it is internationally renowned and uses English as a medium of instruction. When I asked him whether he felt any emotions when he had to take up Singapore citizenship, which meant that he had to renounce his Turkish citizenship, he said:

Extract 6. Mario and emotions for family

1	I am quite nationalistic. Back in my high school years,
2	since I was fourteen years, I was active in politics.
3	I was part of the nationalist student party. Of course,
4	there is a feeling of hurt when giving up [citizenship].
5	That’s who you are and what you are. But on the other
6	hand, this is not doing it for myself but for my child.
7	For my kids. And I love them. So based on that point,
8	I don’t really hesitate. For the kids’ future.

Mario foregrounds the linguistic makeup of Singapore as a primary motivation for choosing to settle in Singapore in his commentary. He talks about the linguistic difficulty that they faced, due to the incompatibility of their linguistic repertoires with other contexts and the loneliness it caused his wife (“she considered herself mute there and blank”), and uses it as a

justification for choosing to settle in Singapore. His metapragmatic commentary on the role of English to his decision to apply for Singapore citizenship resonates with Singapore's language policy that regards English as the neutral resource for interracial communication.

In the extract above, Mario's "feeling of hurt" (line 4) was downplayed by his "love" (line 7) for his children, which shows that he can let go of his own political beliefs to express his love for his children. He presents himself as a father who had to sacrifice for his children. It can be interpreted as Mario's way of presenting himself as someone who made citizenship choices not just for himself but for his family. He recognizes that some aspects of Turkish background, such as his being active in politics, may not have a place in Singapore. While he also said that he is amenable to teaching his children the Turkish way of thinking and life at home even though they are away from it and are living different ways of life in Singapore, his statement in the extract above comes with a tempering of their Turkishness—something he had to sacrifice. Hence, familial relations are not just practical considerations of citizenship choices; rather, it is their very affective dimension that facilitates Mario's view of citizenship. This is crystallized by what he said in line 8, where he claimed that his love for his children trumped his hesitations. Because Singapore is conducive for the growth of their globally exposed family, he had to let other things go in order to match local norms and ideologies, such as sacrificing his political involvement. In this case, Mario is not necessarily presenting himself as someone who has completely abandoned his Turkishness. Rather, he is only giving up a particular mode of life—his nationalistic political engagement—which he attributes to his past youth self.

In his interview, he also told me that he makes it a point to teach his son about Turkish history; he even taught his son how to speak Turkish. Hence, he can still orient to the global, through his transnational ties with Turkey, while orienting to the local, by sacrificing his political engagement. This can be seen as Mario's way of claiming rootedness: while he maintains transnational aspects of his life, he also ensures that he and his family are oriented towards the Singapore way of life. Moreover, by linking this to his son's "future," Mario is able to imply that this orientation towards Singapore is for the long-term. Through this, he was able to present himself as a new citizen who balances the local and the global.

### Sophia

Sophia adds another emotional layer that is more about herself than her family. Sophia moved to Singapore for her first job, which was shortly after she completed her degree in Malaysia, where she was originally from. She met her husband in Singapore. During the interview, Sophia repeatedly claimed that she no longer feels a connection with Malaysia because of the many years that she has spent in Singapore. She says:

#### Extract 7. Sophia, family, and rootedness

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | I changed my citizenship because my family is here.   |
| 2 | My children are here.                                 |
| 3 | I was raised in Malaysia and that used to be my life. |
| 4 | But my family is here now and this is my life now.    |
| 5 | I don't, like, I, have any roots in Malaysia.         |

In the extract above, Sophia clearly attributed her citizenship choice to her family. Their having been based in Singapore for a long time seems to be the primary reason behind this claim, as this extract and the rest of her interview suggest. She links this idea to her own sense of rootedness. How she

describes her “life” must be highlighted—she claims that her life as someone who was raised in Malaysia (line 3) has been overtaken by her new life as a member of a family who lives in Singapore (line 4). She does this by using the sign of familial relations to refer to her feeling of rootedness and localness in Singapore, which affirms the point she repeatedly made during the interview that she feels very Singaporean now. She seems to present herself as a new citizen who has completely lost her “roots” in Malaysia and implies that she now has roots in Singapore. She downplays the global and focuses on the local as she positions herself as a settled new citizen during the interview who has negotiated the global and the local, through the de-emphasis of the former and the emphasis of the latter.

#### *6.3.2.2. Family as Source of Anxiety and Exasperation*

Not all the portrayals of familial relations and concerns were positive. Some of my respondents portrayed their families as a source of anxiety, pressure, or general dissatisfaction in various moments of their lived experiences, including those moments when they felt citizenship became relevant to their lives.

#### Jinky

I wish to start this discussion with Jinky—the only participant who claimed that she was pressured by her in-laws to change her citizenship, which caused her to feel exasperation and anxiety. She had been a PR in Singapore even before she met her then fiancé, and she claimed that while she was open to the idea of changing her citizenship, she did not appreciate receiving so

much pressure from her in-laws to do so, especially because she did not find their reasons to be compelling enough. This can be seen in the extract below.

Extract 8. Jinky and the “pestering” of her in-laws

1	R: Why did you even consider changing to Singaporean?
2	J: Uhm the first thing was because my in-laws keep
3	pestering me about it?
4	R: Oh really?
5	J: Yeah. The moment they know that, the moment my
6	husband actually proposed to me, they were like,
7	do you consider changing to a Singaporean?
8	Like I didn't know why.
9	And then my mother-in-law was, you know in your
10	marriage certificate, it would write like Singaporean
11	citizen and a Malaysian PR. I mean, it doesn't look
12	good. I was like, [emphatic] IT'S ONLY A CERTIFICATE!
13	LIKE SERIOUSLY! [R laughs]
14	I couldn't be bothered.
15	Until my husband and I applied for
16	BTO [Build-To-Order flat].
17	And then, you realize that as a PR you
18	have to pay 10,000 dollars more.

In the extract above, Jinky identifies the pestering of her in-laws as the “first thing” that made her change her citizenship (lines 2-3). Their disagreement stemmed from the difference of their regard for the marriage certificate. For Jinky, it was “only a certificate!” (line 12) and she “could not be bothered” (line 14) because it did not matter to her if it stated that she was a Malaysian citizen and Singapore PR. While she belittles the concern of her in-laws during the interview, she also claims that it caused her some anxiety. While Jinky later on claims that it was the cost of the BTO flat that served as the catalyst for the citizenship change, the feelings of anxiety and exasperation that she expressed as the immediate response to my question need to be appreciated. Her choice of the word “pestering,” after all, suggests that this pressure happened over time. Below is another example.

#### Extract 9. Anti-Malaysia comments from Jinky's in-laws

1 J: My in-laws were still staying that until a few months  
2 ago, they were like, oh Malaysia's such a bad place.  
3 You should convert, you know? Now that you're here,  
4 just convert! Why do you even think of going back or  
5 whatsoever, it's such a stupid place with the Najib<sup>40</sup>  
6 and all these things. I can't understand why  
7 people feel that.  
8 R: I imagine.  
9 J: But my in-laws would say things like,  
10 but Penang is different! Penang is good!  
11 R: Oh, they would say that?  
12 J: They would say that. And in general, when people ask,  
13 are you a Malaysian? And I am like, yeah? And they  
14 ask, where are you from? And I say I'm from Penang!  
15 They're like, oh! Penang is a nice place!  
16 And I'm proud of it  
17 [J laughs, R follows].

This extract shows that her in-laws also pressured her to change her citizenship through direct and explicit negative comments about Malaysia and by implying that Singapore is better than Malaysia. Jinky claims that she “can’t understand why people feel...” (lines 6-7) that the problems of Malaysia are enough reason to just change their citizenship. She was puzzled why her citizenship had to be conflated with corrupt Malaysian politics. In her account of what her mother-in-law told her, it seems that Jinky was being made to not just change her citizenship, but to dissociate or cut off her ties with Malaysia (lines 4-5). Jinky claims that while she does not strongly identify with Malaysia, she strongly identifies with Penang. This can be seen in her hedging (“I am like, yeah?”) in line 13 about the Malaysian label and her confidence (“I say I’m from Penang!”) in line 14. She even says that she is “proud of it” (line 16). She adds:

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<sup>40</sup> This refers to former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak. He faced many corruption-related issues during the 2018 General Elections, which he lost.

### Extract 10. Jinky and Penangite Pride

1	So that's why when you take away the Malaysian side from
2	me, I don't really feel a thing. But if you say that
3	if I'm now a Singaporean, I cannot be someone from
4	Penang anymore? I would say no, I can't give them,
5	I can't give that up. Because it's just so difficult to
6	extract a Penang flavor out of a Penangite.

The extract above crystallizes the extent of her connection with Malaysia and Penang. Jinky reported that she tolerated all these anti-Malaysia comments from her in-laws because they just target Malaysia, not Penang. The Penangite identity that she claims for herself was left unchallenged by her in-laws, so she was generally fine with it. She takes a bold stance as a Penangite in lines 5-6—a rehashing of her Penangite pride mentioned in the previous extract: she refuses to let this part of herself go.

This can be construed as Jinky's objection to being told to erase her transnational and cultural identity as a Penangite. She makes it clear that she does not see her Penangite pride as incompatible with being Singaporean, and hence, she claims that she does not think it is justified to give her Penangite pride. In a way, this is comparable to Mario's case above: while both Mario and Jinky can sacrifice some aspects of themselves (political engagement for Mario and Malaysian citizenship for Jinky), it does not mean to say that they have to sacrifice everything just to become Singaporean, especially if they do not find it incompatible with Singapore.

Jinky told me about one specific instance when she really felt the relationship between citizenship and her familial relations, and how this induced a significant amount of anxiety on her and how she views the impact of changing her citizenship on her everyday life. This was about whether she should spend Chinese New Year (CNY) in Singapore or in Penang. Her in-

laws expected her to spend it with them in Singapore, while she was under the impression that she would spend it in Penang. Given that the dinner is the most important part of the CNY celebrations, and she had to pick one location and family over the other, the two families had to compromise—the families allowed her to spend reunion dinners every year alternating between Singapore and Penang. She said that it was during this time when Jinky actually felt the impact of her citizenship change on her everyday life, as we can see below.

Extract 11. Jinky, reunion dinner, and citizenship

1 And they settled with me having my reunion dinner,  
2 a year in Singapore, and a year in Penang. So, having to  
3 renounce my citizenship actually feels a little bit like  
4 that, I just want like the last few moments spent in  
5 Malaysia. Cos whenever I thought of like you know I have  
6 to surrender my passport and all that, I thought wow!  
7 The last time I flew out of Malaysia was actually the  
8 last time I used this passport! So there was the kind of  
9 feeling that I can't go back to you know, spend I dunno,  
10 my reunion dinner, that sort of thing? So it feels  
11 similar emotionally. But, well, we'll just make do with  
12 it, give and take.

In this extract, Jinky talks about the reunion dinner as a catalyst for her to concretely experience, and reflect on, the impact of the notion of Singapore citizenship to her life. This shows that citizenship can be called into being and become a palpable issue not just in regimented moments such as the citizenship application process but also in everyday moments and concerns: it also has to be negotiated on the level of the everyday.

Let us now establish the importance of these narratives to Jinky's presentation of herself as a new citizen who negotiates the global and the local. First, the extracts show us that Jinky's accounts of her exasperation with her in-laws are related to the emotional connection she claims to have with



Penang. While Jinky claims to be amenable to becoming a Singapore citizen, she opposes the idea that she has to give up her being a Penangite. This suggests that that renouncing one's citizenship in order to take up a new one does not require a complete erasure of all aspects of transnational cultural identities, such as Jinky's Penangite pride. In these extracts, Jinky talks about other things that she was willing to compromise, such as family CNY traditions and her "Malaysian side" (Extract 11). But she cannot give up her transnational connection with Penang. This can be interpreted as Jinky's way of presenting herself as someone who contests the global-local dichotomy. By implying that she can be Singaporean and a Penangite at the same time, and the two are not antithetical to each other, Jinky presents herself as a new citizen who is rooted enough in Singapore even though she chooses to maintain some aspects of her cosmopolitan orientation.

### Mandy

Mandy talked about being reminded about how different she is from her family whenever conflicts between their "very Pinoy"<sup>41</sup> (Mandy's words) way of life conflicts with her "so Singaporean" way of life. She claims that these differences sometimes caused her anxiety and frustration. She described her parents as "generally okay" with the Singapore way of life, but they tend to be quite "racist" sometimes. For instance, she said that it frustrated her

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<sup>41</sup> "Pinoy" is the colloquial term used by Filipinos to refer to "Filipino." When used among Filipinos, this term is generally semantically neutral. In Singapore, "Pinoy" sometimes gets a pejorative value. For instance, Singaporeans tend to use "Pinoy" when describing Filipinos in a bad way. Some of my friends thought it was a Singaporean term, which would suggest that some Singaporeans are unaware that it is a term used by Filipinos to describe themselves. Mandy's use of "Pinoy" during the interview was neutral, at least based on my assessment.

whenever her parents would talk about “smelly Indians” or “crude Chinese”—which she associates with their being Filipino; she said that Singaporeans would not dare say those things but Filipinos would. She said that this frustration served as a constant reminder for her that she is more Singaporean than her parents, even though they are all technically Singaporean now. Based on her emotions and lived experiences, she implies that citizenship is not a static political category; it is a dynamic and gradable one. This is demonstrated in this extract:

Extract 12. Mandy and Pinoy pride

1	Yeah, they [her parents] are super Pinoy. I am the only
2	one who is not super Pinoy. They have this Pinoy pride
3	in them, like, “You know the Miss Universe? Philippines
4	won there!” My friends are so proud, “yan (“that”),
5	yang mga Pinoy” ganun (“those Filipinos”), like,
6	“matalino din mga Pinoy!” (“Filipinos are smart too!”)
7	“Magaganda!” (“And beautiful!”) And stuff like that.
8	And I’m just like ok, right. Other races are smart too.
9	I don’t know. I just don’t feel that Pinoy pride a lot.

Mandy clearly distances herself from her parents and other Filipinos, best seen in her choice of pronominals (“they” vs. “I”) and her claim in line 9 that she does not feel Pinoy pride a lot. She aligns herself more with Singaporeans throughout the interview. For instance, she expressed her reservations about maintaining a very high level of “Pinoy pride” when Filipinos are based in Singapore, especially when they become Singapore citizens. She argued that while it is acceptable to still have Pinoy pride, people should make an effort to not flaunt it. Mandy seems to imply that citizenship is not just a political status; rather, it can also be a product of banal acts which can represent various emotions.

Similar to Jinky, Mandy also talked about an instance when citizenship manifests itself in accounts of banal familial affairs, such as how they celebrate Christmas and New Year. This can be seen in the extract below:

**Extract 13. Mandy's feeling of being out of place**

1	So my sense of attachment is here. So yeah, it may be a
2	piece of paper but all your experiences, all your
3	memories are here so that's why in terms of
4	citizenship, I will take a Singapore citizenship any day
5	cause this is my home. That kind of thing.
6	But sometimes I still feel out of place. Ok. My family
7	is very Filipino right? So Christmas must be spent with
8	families. New Year must be spent with family.

Similar to Jinky, Mandy claims to have felt the relevance of citizenship to her everyday life in traditional gatherings such as Christmas and New Year: in Singapore, it is common for adolescents to spend Christmas with friends and go to parties, while in the Philippines, Christmas is usually spent at home with family. This seems to present a dilemma for Mandy—should she abide by Filipino or Singaporean traditions? This makes her feel “out of place” (line 6). She links these feelings to her evaluation of Singapore citizenship—that it is something that she will take any day because this is her home (lines 5-6). Mandy positioned herself during the interview as a new citizen who feels exasperated with cultural differences such as this because she claims to be “very Singaporean.”

In these two extracts, Mandy presents herself as someone who puts up with mindsets, behaviors, and traditions that her family members have which she considers “Filipino.” As someone who strongly identifies as Singaporean, Mandy claims to tolerate these even though they are incompatible with what she describes as the Singaporean way of life. Her distancing from these behaviors helps her portray herself as someone who orients to the local way of

life: in Extract 13, she counters Pinoy pride by saying that “other races are smart too” (line 8). Mandy’s case seems to be different from Jinky’s: while Jinky chooses to keep aspects of her Penangite pride, Mandy distances herself from her family’s Filipino pride. However, both examples show that by describing how they manage transnational aspects of their lives, my participants can consequently show that they are rooted Singaporeans. Hence, accounts of exasperation facilitate how Jinky and Mandy present themselves as rooted Singaporeans because they strike a balance between the global and the local.

### Jenny

The negative feelings such as anxiety, frustration, and exasperation that my participants have do not just come from what their families do but also from where their family is situated in their perceptions of their citizenship trajectories. Jenny is a good example of this. Her family members are Malaysian citizens, and they are all based in Malaysia. This can be seen in this extract, which was part of our conversation about whether she remembered feeling emotional during the citizenship application process:

#### Extract 14. Jenny’s anxiety during the renunciation

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | R: Was there like a dramatic moment or anything?                        |
| 2 | J: Oath taking part! She [Joanna] <sup>42</sup> kind of like warned me, |
| 3 | when they were reading out, so it was an oath taking                    |
| 4 | thing, so you swear to be a Singaporean and you read                    |
| 5 | that particular paragraph <sup>43</sup> , and whoa! it was just me      |

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<sup>42</sup> Joanna was present during my interview with Jenny. This happened months after I had interviewed Joanna. She was the one who introduced me to Jenny so I can recruit her as a research participant. She was mostly quiet during the interview, except when we were engaging in personal conversations which were not related to the interview itself.

6 and the officer, and I nearly felt that my voice was  
 7 trembling to finish the whole part!  
 8 R: Why is that?  
 9 J: I dunno, it's really, it feels like something very  
 10 serious. Not to say that I take it as a joke, but to  
 11 read a paragraph that explicitly says that I pledge  
 12 allegiance to Singapore. Hey! I'm putting it down  
 13 there as whatever happens, in case of warfare or  
 14 whatever, I have to be on the Singapore side, not on  
 15 the Malaysia side. Even though my relatives are back  
 16 there. So that was the hard part. The only time I  
 17 hesitated. But other than that, I just went for it  
 18 R: So it wasn't because of an emotional connection to  
 19 Malaysia? It was because of your connection to  
 20 your relatives who were in Malaysia?  
 21 J: Correct.

In this extract, Jenny uses her family as a sign to discuss her allegiance. It is not the family per se that affected how she felt about the renunciation; rather, it is the idea of her family being residents of Malaysia that triggered this anxiety and made her feel the impact of her citizenship change. Jenny was one of my participants who expressed very strong feelings against their countries of origin. In the interview, she described Malaysia as a place which treats ethnically Chinese people badly, even though they are Malaysian citizens. During the interview, she recalled an instance when she felt discriminated for not speaking Malay when she was renewing her passport at the Malaysian immigration office. Even though she repeatedly claimed that she was a “victim of racism” in Malaysia, she still felt a connection to it because it is where her family members live. The performative aspect of reciting the oath elicited this thought, and Jenny was not comfortable with that, as seen in her claims about the trembling of her voice and her having

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<sup>43</sup> She refers to the Oath of Renunciation, Allegiance, and Loyalty (ORAL). A copy of ORAL can be accessed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/dam/mfa/images/om/washington/OathForm.pdf>.

difficulty to finish the rite (lines 6-7). She used the sign of the family in the interview to position herself as someone who may have multiple allegiances—heavily influenced by her familial relations—even though she dislikes many things about Malaysia.

This implies that Jenny's emotions during a supposedly ceremonial, bureaucratic, and regimented recitation of the ORAL reflects the intersection of her perception of what Singapore citizenship means—fighting for Singapore and not Malaysia in case a war happens—and how she feels for her family. While she initially foregrounded this hesitation, she eventually downplayed it: in lines 16-17, she claimed that it was the only “hard part” that caused her to “hesitate,” but for everything else, she just “went for it.” This suggests that Jenny's claim to Singaporeanness supersedes her hesitation, at least according to the structure of her narrative. Hence, the reference to her family in the narrative seems to function to throw into relief her embodied commitment to Singapore—despite her momentary “hesitation” during the ORAL recitation caused by her family's being in Malaysia, she is nonetheless invested in becoming Singaporean. This can be interpreted as an example of how Jenny negotiated the global and the local. She uses family as a sign to index her co-existing connection with her family in Malaysia and her investment in becoming Singaporean, which makes her seem as a new citizen who, despite having a level of orientation to another state, is still rooted in Singapore.

### 6.3.3. Family, Belonging, and Rootedness

In this section, I explored how my participants portrayed the roles that their families played in how they view and experience citizenship in their accounts of experiences and emotions in their interview narratives. While these portrayals reflect positive and negative emotions, they show how my participants embedded their articulations of citizenship in family affairs. This shows that family affairs serve as a resource for the articulation of citizenship. I showed how the emotions that my participants had for their families provide important nuances to how they experience citizenship. My participants' narratives about feelings of belongingness in Singapore, nostalgia and identification for their hometowns, frustration about cultural differences, and affirmation that they made the right decision allow them to position themselves as new citizens who, despite having global backgrounds or orientations, are still rooted in Singapore. Even their rootedness in their countries of origin can be seen as something that keeps them even more rooted in Singapore. For instance, having emotional ties with their countries of origin does not mean that they are more rooted there and less rooted in Singapore; rather, their rootedness there helps them become more rooted in Singapore. Hence, based on how families were talked about in the narratives, we can see how family can be used as a sign to index the negotiation of localness and globalness in the interview narratives, which facilitates how my participants above positioned themselves as new citizens of Singapore.

The material benefits that come with citizenship—a central thrust of public discourses in Singapore such as those discussed in Chapter 5—become deeply situated in familial and emotional affairs, which gives credence to the

analysis of the uptake of my participants. For instance, the question of “what is best for my family?” cannot simply be answered by an inventory of the rights, benefits, and privileges that new citizens can get from their citizenship change. This chapter shows that even “material benefits” are emotional and experiential by nature, based on how they were talked about in the interviews. That is, when my participants talk about them, they link the said benefits to how they experience or feel about their lives, and their families’, in Singapore. Hence, citizenship should be understood not just as a political status that provides material benefits, but as a notion that new citizens make sense of through the lens of their everyday experiences, including their familial relations.

We can further unpack the relationship between narratives about family relations and citizenship through the metapragmatic approach. I have so far argued that family relations serve a resource that my participants used in positioning themselves during the interview; hence, the family can be viewed as a sign that could index an image of being rooted in Singapore. This differs from dominant discourses in Singapore, such as the global/local and heartlander/cosmopolitan dichotomies (discussed in Section 6.2): families tend to not be included in discussions of citizenship. Discourses about (new) citizenship tend to revolve around the citizen himself—for instance, a heartlander behaves and thinks this way and a cosmopolitan behaves and thinks in another way.

However, by using family as a sign to index their rootedness, my participants are able to add to the semiotic range of the metasign of citizenship. For instance, they reconfigure the indexicality of transnational



families (“global”) by using it as a sign of rootedness (“local”). This indexicality is based on how they make sense of their previous emotions and experiences and how perceive their backgrounds and positions in Singapore society. Following Johnstone and Kiesling’s (2008) point, they created this indexicality based on how they made sense of who they are, and they used this indexicality in presenting themselves during the interview. Through this, they are able to contest the global/local dichotomy by presenting themselves as people who have negotiated it. By doing so, they can reconfigure dominant discourses on citizenship and rootedness by tweaking it to a way that would fit their backgrounds. This creates a new citizen image that they can legitimately and effectively claim for themselves. They even go beyond the view that they must simultaneously be local and global: they show that their globalness reinforces their localness through the sign of family relations. This is something that is not accounted for in dominant discourses in Singapore.

In the following section, I explore another salient issue that my participants talked about in their narratives—mobility as it is embedded in their discussions about the Singapore passport. This relates to this section about accounts of family relations because it shows how my participants’ accounts of their cosmopolitan sensibilities are not antithetical to their orientation to the local, which is another example of the importance of the negotiation of the global and the local to understanding citizenship in Singapore.

#### **6.4. Passports, Mobility, and Globalness**

As discussed in Chapter 2, mobility and cosmopolitanism are commonly appropriated in Singapore official discourses as an integral part of the Singapore identity. This can be seen in the plethora of research about transmigrants, citizenship education, and the notion of desirable citizens in Singapore that were discussed in Chapter 2. The common denominator of these studies is that Singapore immigration policies, especially those that concern citizenship applications, favor people who have cosmopolitan and mobile backgrounds and who use them to contribute back to, as they continue forming roots in, Singapore. Montsion's (2012) paper effectively encapsulates this ideology in his interrogation of the notion of "desirable citizens", which he characterizes as people who were deemed mobile enough to simultaneously use their cosmopolitan backgrounds as they live their lives in Singapore.

In this section, I examine my participants' narratives about their mobile and cosmopolitan backgrounds in their articulations of citizenship. I specifically zoom into one issue that was reiterated by all my participants in their interview narratives—the passport. Research on migration and citizenship have explored the role of passports in people's lives as migrants. In Ho's (2008) study of Singaporeans who are long-term residents in the United Kingdom, she talks about how her participants drew links between the legal and personal aspects of passports in their narratives—that is, the lack of a dual citizenship option in Singapore law palpably transforms into a personal issue for her respondents because it entails not having two passports. Similarly, Ong (1999) talks about how her participants talked about the passport as one of the main resources that they can accumulate in exercising their flexible

citizenship; while the passport can mean many things (e.g. mobility, identity, economic asset) to her respondents, the general notion of a passport is an integral resource for people to practice their flexible citizenship. Ong's work treats notions of citizenship and mobility as ideas that can be concretized through specific resources. Hence, in this section, I examine how my participants talk about mobility in their discussions about passports.

I argue that discussions about passports and what they entail can help us understand how my participants discursively construct citizenship in their interview narratives. Passports are documents that legally authorize someone as a citizen of a country. In the case of Singapore, only Singapore citizens are allowed to own a Singapore passport, which makes it an integral part of the citizenship application process. However, as my interview narratives suggest, passports can mean more than just the state's recognition of my participants' citizenship: it can represent a variety of issues.

Before we proceed to this analysis, I wish to first provide a brief discussion on the general patterns of how passports were talked about during the interviews. This describes why I thought treating passport as a theme in this chapter was warranted.

#### 6.4.1. Passports as Theme

Passports are a common topic in my interviews with my participants. The most obvious reason for this was that the passport is an integral part of the citizenship application process. New citizens are required by law to invalidate and/or surrender their old passports to their former countries of citizenship as part of the renunciation procedure. Moreover, upon approval of their

citizenship application, new citizens receive their Singapore passports. While there are other documents that signify the completion of the citizenship application process and straightforwardly proves one citizenship (e.g. in-principle approval letter, Singaporean identification card/ pink IC), my participants talked about passports more. What differentiates the passport from these other documents is that passports are primarily about international mobility: it is a travel document that not only proves one's citizenship but allows the person to travel across national borders.

Because my interviews explicitly probed into the citizenship application process, I had expected that passports would be talked about in detail in the interview even before conducting them. It was only after the fieldwork—when I started analyzing my data—that I realized that my participants did not just talk about the passport as a concrete document that they lose or acquire throughout the citizenship application process. Rather, they link it to the notion of mobility. Many of my participants almost automatically talk about it, without prompts from me, whenever they talked about issues of geographical mobility, such as traveling to other places, maintaining connections with their former countries of citizenship, and feeling a concrete connection with Singapore. They attach different values to it, and it affects how they envision their identities, the notion of citizenship, and their status as new citizens.

All my participants talked about their former and current passports in the interview. All of them talked about the passport as a travel document which had something to do with the citizenship application process. This includes invalidating or nullifying their former passports and acquiring their

new Singapore passports. All my participants talked about the passport before I even asked them about it. This is perhaps due to the structure of my interview questions. One of the questions I asked during the earlier parts of the interview was “What was the process of changing your citizenship like?”.

17 out of 18 participants (Nigel was the exception) said that having a Singapore passport benefited them, mostly because the Singapore passport was better than their former passports. Nigel claimed that the passport change did not make any difference to him because the Singapore passport is almost the same as his former passport—a German one. He claimed that he did not feel any difference between the two.

My participants who regularly travelled for work or pleasure (e.g. Sharon, Joanna, Mario) talked about the passport more than the participants who did not travel as much (e.g. Arya, Skanda, Patrice). The former group had many remarks about the benefit of having a Singapore passport especially in relation to visa applications and immigration checks.

Finally, there were instances when some of my participants used “citizenship” and “passport” interchangeably. In a way, many of my participants seem to treat the passport as a metonymy<sup>44</sup> of citizenship. For instance, Soraya said that she renounced her Sri Lankan passport (not citizenship).

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<sup>44</sup> While I acknowledge that metonymy is a major concept in cognitive linguistics, semantics, or metaphor studies (e.g. Barcelona, 2012; Dirven & Pörings, 2002), I use this term here in its loose and general sense. That is, I use metonymy to refer to its lay definition: the replacement of a supposed object or meaning (e.g. citizenship) by an attribute or comprising feature that it supposedly has (e.g. passport). I do not further problematize metonymy in this section for two reasons. First, it is not integral to the argument that I make here. Second, I instead focus on its semiotic aspects and implications.

My participants' narratives reveal that the passport can mean to them more than this legal definition. While they talk about the passport in relation to this legal definition, they also portray the passport as a material document that relates to their social dynamics and feelings, which contributes to our understanding of how citizenship is situated in their lived experiences. In the following section, I discuss how my participants talked about passports in their narratives in two ways: Singapore passport and mobility, and former passports and sentimentality. I argue that discussions about the passports enabled my participants to present themselves as mobile and global new citizens, which demonstrates how citizenship can be viewed as the negotiation of the global and the local.

#### 6.4.2. Singapore Passport and Mobility

Many of my participants cited the Singapore passport as a major reason behind their decision to apply for Singapore citizenship. The Singapore passport is known for being a very powerful passport—in 2018, it was ranked as the world's most powerful passport because it allows visa-free access to 166 countries (Passport Index, 2018)<sup>45</sup>. The semiotic connection between Singapore citizenship and the Singapore passport is also widely reflected in public discourses on citizenship-based rights and obligations in Singapore.

My participants claim to value the power of the Singapore passport and link it to their narratives about citizenship. One of the most common narratives about this is that the Singapore passport enables my participants to more

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<sup>45</sup> Passport-ranking companies tend to have inconsistent results yearly, so the absolute number should be taken with caution. The inclusion of this information is merely to demonstrate the power of the Singapore passport.

comfortably travel to different countries as part of the demands of their work or personal lives, which matters to them emotionally. This means that their understanding of the strength of the Singapore passport is also rooted in their lived experiences, social relations, and emotions. Hence, my participants talk about the political power of the Singapore passport are not just based on this political knowledge but also on how they feel its impact on their everyday lives. I demonstrate this by looking at two examples: Sharon and Mario.

### Sharon

Sharon has a high position in the human resources department of a prestigious multinational company (MNC) in the automobile industry, which compels her to travel for work regularly. Because this company is based in Europe, she often goes to Europe and North America. As a former Philippine passport holder, this meant that Sharon regularly had to apply for and pay for visa fees, because the countries that she had to go to on a regular basis require Philippine passport holders to apply for visas. She said that this caused her many inconveniences in the past. She also alluded to the process of being checked with tighter immigration procedures as “bordering on humiliating” during our interview.

#### Extract 15. Sharon’s view of the Singapore passport.

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | R: You briefly mentioned your reasons for changing your |
| 2  | citizenship pero [but] you have other reasons why you   |
| 3  | changed it.   |
| 4  | S: Yes, aside from my son, it was also because of       |
| 5  | travelling. I am required to travel because of work     |
| 6  | and holding a Philippine passport you always have to    |
| 7  | apply for visa anywhere except ASEAN [Association of    |
| 8  | Southeast Asian Nations]. And more so if they see       |
| 9  | that you are holding a Filipino passport – either       |
| 10 | they ask for more documents or you have a longer        |

11	waiting time because they have to do many checks.
12	Because of this inconvenience and for the long term
13	we'll be calling SG our home so I thought I might as
14	well change and be naturalized.

In this extract, Sharon presents herself as a cosmopolitan person: a frequent traveller who considers Singapore home. She phrases it in a way that she does not have a choice about these travels (line 5). However, she has a choice whether or not she would take a passport that would make traveling easier. Because of this, she states she appreciates the political power of the Singapore passport. This seems to be very important to Sharon since it was her direct response to my question. This does not mean that she only views the passport for its political power; rather, it is connected with her notion of “home” (line 13). She cushions this cosmopolitan image by claiming that she considers Singapore home.

I asked Sharon if she felt that she “had to let go of aspects of her Philippine nationality, some aspects of that culture” during the interview. She responded to this question by saying that she did not feel she had to lose her Filipinoness because “it’s already in you...your personality, your experience, your memories.” She then adds, “I didn’t feel like am deprived of anything. I still can go to the Philippines without the visa.” While she does not mention the passport in this particular sentence, it can be implied that it was about the Singapore passport: Singapore passport holders do not need a visa to go to the Philippines. Sharon said that this was important to her because she can visit her family in the Philippines frequently, which allows her to easily maintain ties with them.

We can then see how Sharon’s statements about visa-less travels to many countries are not purely motivated by her career; rather, these are



connected to her concerns of being rooted in Singapore while being able to maintain her personal connection to the Philippines. In other words, the passport becomes a representation not just of her career choices, but also her emotional connection with her former and current countries of citizenship. Hence, she construes the passport as a resource that helps her keep up with her cosmopolitan self while remaining a member of Singapore society who still has some roots in the Philippines. This shows that her definition of “home” is not purely based on being rooted in Singapore but is also influenced by the fact that she can still go to the Philippines without a visa. Hence, rootedness is not just about orienting to the local; it may also involve a global orientation because “home” does not cause any tensions or conflicts between the local and the global. This rootedness may have been qualified in relation to tensions or conflicts, but it is a kind of rootedness that Sharon can effectively claim for herself without having to deny the transnational aspects of her life.

### Mario

Like Sharon, Mario is a frequent traveller. He also has a high position in an MNC: he works as a manager for his company’s warehouse and manufacturing department. He used to hold a Turkish passport and he claimed that the process of getting a visa whenever he travelled became “tiring” not just for himself, but also for his family. His wife and children were Singapore citizens, but he was Turkish. Because of this, he had concerns similar to Sharon’s, such as “concerns in the passport checks, and too many questions here and there...I need to ask for a visa.” He also said that because Turkish passport holders need a visa to go to China, he cannot even visit the relatives

of his wife whenever problems occurred there. Moreover, he added that traveling with his parents-in-law, whom he described as “elderly,” proved to be difficult because he would always be delayed at immigration counters for more visa-related checks. This was important to Mario because he claims that his family affairs matter a lot to him, which I discussed in greater detail in the previous section.

While both Sharon and Mario needed the Singapore passport for their global mobility, Mario’s articulations seem to be more situated in his family affairs; he even cited the traveling comfort of his parents-in-law as a significant concern for him. The extract below demonstrates this point:

Extract 16. Mario and the Singapore passport as clincher

1	In other places also, if you want to go to Australia,
2	New Zealand, those places, anywhere, except Indonesia,
3	I need visas. So we need to have a Singapore passport.
4	Then, since we settle here, we already have a house
5	here, a car, I’m working in an MNC here, so I didn’t
6	even really think much. I just applied for it.

Mario, like Sharon, considered the Singapore passport as the last clincher for him to decide to apply for citizenship. Like Sharon, he also juxtaposes his global mobility with being rooted in Singapore. Both Mario and Sharon talk about their experiences as frequent travelers as a reason for wanting the Singapore passport. Moreover, in their narratives, both Mario and Sharon link this to how they imagine Singapore as their home—that they are rooted in Singapore and it is sensible to get the passport so they can make their mobile lives easier. Hence, they both present themselves as cosmopolitans who not only travel for economic reasons, but as people who maintain ties elsewhere while living their life as new citizens.

This section shows that Singapore passports are portrayed in the interviews not just as indexes of citizenship but also of mobility. It can be seen as an example of “reward” (Joanna), “convenience” (Mario and Isabel), and an enabler of maintaining ties not just to foreign countries but also to their countries of origin (Sharon). This shows us that the background of my participants as fairly mobile people directly relates to how they positioned themselves as new citizens during the interview—which cements the link between passports, mobility, and citizenship that scholars such as Ho (2008), and Ong (1999), among others, talk about. It seems that new Singapore citizenship subsumes a certain form of flexible citizenship. Because my participants claimed that the passport is a major consideration that they had for applying for Singapore citizenship, we can argue that their view of Singapore citizenship is consistent with capital accumulation that Ong (1999) discusses. There is a slight point of departure from Ong in the narratives of my participants. While the notion of flexible citizenship is heavily premised on the economic sense of capital accumulation, my participants, in addition to this economic capital accumulation, also have emotional reasons that drive this desire for capital accumulation—from having convenient travels to maintaining ties with family in other parts of the world. This affective dimension is something that Ong does not particularly focus on, and hence, does not sufficiently account for in her theorization of citizenship. This gives credence to my argument that the emotional and experiential aspects of citizenship should be considered when analyzing the discursive construction of citizenship.

### 6.4.3. Former Passports and Sentimentality

The passport can also be linked to issues of sentimentality and memory that go with citizenship, which we can see in Soraya's discussion below. As discussed earlier, Soraya's journey to Singapore citizenship was heavily influenced by her desire to pursue her romantic relationship while serving her service obligation and starting a sustainable life in Singapore. During the interview, she claimed that her emotional ties with Sri Lanka, her country of origin, were not very strong. One of the main reasons behind this, according to her, was that she was not part of the ethnic majority, the Sinhalese. She is a Burgher<sup>46</sup>. This meant that their way of life in Sri Lanka was quite different from the Sinhalese, and hence, it is something that she can carry with her wherever she may be. The general tone that she had in the interview was she felt that there was nothing in particular that ties her back to Sri Lanka while there are many that tie her to Singapore. There was a slight change in this tone when I asked her about the citizenship application. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

#### Extract 17. Soraya's unhappiness with the taking of her passport

1	And then after that I had to renounce my Sri Lankan
2	passport, I had to return it to the High Commission.
3	They didn't just cut the corner of my passport, they
4	just took the whole thing, and I was like what do you
5	mean?! Can't you just stamp it as cancelled?! Why do you
6	have to take it?! And it was so sad. Like when I went
7	back to the ICA, I saw everyone had their passports
8	with that corner cut, they do that, I saw a lot of
9	people with the Indian passports with the corners cut.
10	And then I officially got a letter that says that I have
11	officially renounced my Sri Lankan citizenship.

In line 2, Soraya seems to equate "Sri Lankan citizenship" to "Sri Lankan passport." Legally speaking, one "renounces" his/her citizenship and

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<sup>46</sup> Burgher people are a minority Eurasian ethnic group in Sri Lanka.

not his/her “passport.” However, for Soraya, these two seem to be the synonymous. This affirms the point I made in Section 6.4.1 that my participants generally thought of the passport as a metonymy of citizenship. More importantly, Soraya talks about the passport in two different ways. First, she talks about the passport as a physical and material object that can be taken away (line 4), cut (lines 3, 7-9), stamped (line 5), or kept (implied in lines 5-6). The underlying emotion behind her discussion of the passport as a material object is sadness (line 6)—or even frustration (lines 4-6)—driven by the fact that she could not keep it after it had been declared null and void by the Sri Lankan government. Through this excerpt, Soraya was able to position herself as someone who has not completely dissociated from her Sri Lankan roots, even though she initially claimed that she does not have any strong emotional connections to Sri Lanka. Soraya seems to think of the passport as a material document that represents her citizenship, and in a way, she incorporates a sense of sentimentality—a feeling of being attached to the politically inutile passport based on emotional reasons of what it supposedly stands for—into the passport: she preferred to be given a chance to keep it as a souvenir or memento. What should be noted here is that while the legal validity of her Sri Lankan passport had been nullified, the passport still serves as an index of her former citizenship.

This somehow contrasts with her resonant claim in the interview that she did not feel any emotional connection with Sri Lanka; it is likely that Soraya still has a certain degree of emotional connection with Sri Lanka, although it may not be strong enough for her to explicitly say it in the interview. Another likely explanation is that her attachment over her passport

may not be driven by her emotional connection with Sri Lanka; rather, it may be driven by her connection to her own immigration journey or her sense of self vis-à-vis her immigration trajectory. The common denominator between these two possible explanations is that Soraya values the indexical power of her Sri Lankan passport to signify her former life in Sri Lanka and the roots that she downplayed during the interview. The passport becomes a memento of her cosmopolitan background and history, which she claimed to prefer to have even though she is a Singapore citizen now.

Hence, Soraya's discussion about the passport suggests that sentimental associations to countries of former citizenship, as represented by the passport, may not be incompatible with Singaporeanness. Soraya's narrative presents her as a new citizen who, despite her wanting to keep her passport, is a Singapore citizen. This can be seen as another example of how my participants position themselves in the interview as people who, despite simultaneously having global and local orientations, are still legitimate Singapore citizens after all.

### Joanna

The sentimental value attached to passports can be seen in the accounts of Joanna. During the interview, I asked her why her parents are still PRs when all their children had decided to become Singapore citizens. While Joanna gave me several reasons behind this, one of the reasons that she highlighted was the passport. According to her, her parents thought it would be strange for them to not be allowed to stay in Manila for more than 30 days without a visa, which is what would happen if they let go of their Philippine

passport. She claimed that while her parents feel very much rooted in Singapore because they have been living in Singapore for decades, they still get “quite emotional” whenever they feel like their connection to the Philippines as Filipino citizens would be compromised.

Joanna asserted that she did not share these concerns; in fact, she said that she felt that the Singapore passport was a “reward” whenever she would need to travel to a non-ASEAN country, and that she did not mind having to apply for a visa should she want to stay in the Philippines for more than 30 days, because she thought it was not likely to happen anytime soon. However, she said that she was sympathetic to the views of her parents because they have lived for a much longer time in the Philippines than her, and hence, she understands why this meant more to them than to her.

Here, we can see that what differentiates Joanna’s narratives from her parents’ is not what the passport can do, but how they feel about it. In the case of Joanna’s parents, it is not the passport itself, such as in the case of Soraya, that evokes emotional connections to their countries of origin; rather, it is the idea of a passport and the possibility of losing it and facing the emotional repercussions of doing so that influenced Joanna’s parents. In their case, the passport serves as a continuous reminder of their Filipino citizenship. This case is slightly different from the case of Soraya—Joanna’s parents do not have a Singapore passport and their Filipino passports are the only passports that they have.

What is common between the two examples is that the passport serves as a reminder of their citizenship-based identities. This indexical capacity is rooted in people’s understanding of what citizenship is and how it can be

represented. The lack of a dual citizenship option in Singapore that compels people to renounce their former citizenship and let go of their passports consequently influences how people attach emotional values to passports. While Soraya seems to have realized this emotional association in hindsight, it is a matter of everyday reality for Joanna's parents, which impacts how they continue to decide to keep their Filipino citizenship and also their view of citizenship in general.

This relates to the theme of citizenship as deliberation identified in Chapter 5. Deliberations made by people about citizenship are conditioned not just by economic benefits, or confined within the purview of statal narratives and programs, but also by emotional ones which may or may not even relate to economic benefits. This contributes to our understanding of citizenship because it shows how citizenship is encountered and negotiated in accounts of emotions and everyday life. For instance, while keeping passports as souvenirs can be considered trite in relation to the political understanding of citizenship (e.g. citizenship application process or the issue of dual citizenship), they can be consequential to how my participants negotiate citizenship in their accounts of encountering the notion of citizenship in their everyday lives, as seen in how they present themselves as new citizens during the interview.

It can be argued that the points discussed above are particularly relevant to new citizens. Local-born citizens or foreigners who do not aspire to change their citizenships would not need to face a predicament of memorializing their former citizenships through mementos or having to decide to not entertain the possibility of changing their citizenship due to the complications changing a passport may cause. It is the notion of new



citizenship that makes these narratives about the passports relevant to the discursive construction of citizenship as a whole. By looking at narratives such as the ones discussed above, we can understand forms of indexing citizenship that we would have otherwise missed if we did not take into account the perspective of new citizens.

#### 6.4.4. Cosmopolitan Identities and Citizenship

In this section, I discussed how my participants' mobile lives, as represented in their accounts of the role of the Singapore passport in their everyday lives, contribute to our understanding of citizenship. Discussion about the passport enables my participants to make sense of how they actually experience citizenship. Passports can mean many things to my participants—a travel resource for Mario and Sharon, a souvenir of the past for Soraya, a reward for Joanna, and a reminder of Filipinoness for Joanna's parents. Passports allow my participants to make sense of the identities that resulted from their immigration choices, maintain ties in Singapore and other countries, and feel that they are settling into Singapore as new Singapore citizens, which are integral to the continuation of the very mobile lives that they live.

We can further unpack the relationship between narratives about passports and citizenship through the metapragmatic approach. I have so far argued that passports serve as resources that my participants used in positioning themselves during the interview; hence, the passport can be viewed as a sign that could index a certain identity for my participants—a new citizen who, despite having a mobile life or transnational connections with other countries, is still Singaporean. In the interviews, it is evident that my

participants talk about passports as a legal document that directly relates to citizenship—passports were something that they gained or lost when they changed their citizenships. This is not surprising: passports are signs that are strongly typified as part of the semiotic range of the metasign of citizenship. In other words, passports are one of the most commonly used signs to signify citizenship. However, my participants talk about this indexicality in relation to their experiences and emotions—for instance, their discussions about the desirable power of the Singapore passport were done in relation to their narratives about calling Singapore “home.” This facilitates the addition of more indexicalities to passports: it can index political authorization and recognition (e.g. it is a powerful travel document) and a balanced orientation to mobility (e.g. it enables people to live mobile lives and maintain transnational connections) and rootedness (e.g. it ties them back to Singapore). Similar to how family was used as a sign in the previous section, my participants tweaked the indexicalities of passports to present themselves as new citizens who contest the binary opposition of the global and the local by showing how interconnected these are in their daily lives.

Mobility can be seen as an integral part of being a new citizen in Singapore. It is part of living a transnational life and it is consistent with the general rhetoric of the government, as discussed in Chapter 2. My participants’ discussions about the Singapore passport and how it affects their everyday lives as new citizens, such as being able to maintain geographical and emotional connections with their former and current countries of citizenship, shows that their mobility as individuals is part of their lives as new citizens. This affirms Montsion’s (2012) point on how the merging of talent

and mobility has become a prerequisite for being desirable citizens in Singapore. While it cannot be ascertained whether my participants received their Singapore citizenship due to their mobility since it is not listed as an “eligibility requirement” (see Chapter 2.3.1), the fact that many of my participants talked about various manifestations of mobility suggests that mobility is something that my participants found useful in positioning themselves as new citizens during the interview.

The narratives of my participants about passports and mobility are also consistent with Ong’s (1999) notion of flexible citizenship. According to her, people, through the use of various resources such as passports, navigate around citizenship boundaries in order to accumulate different material successes wherever they may be currently based in. The narratives of my participants about the passport and how it enables them to maintain mobile lives which they believe is good for them affirm Ong’s point. However, my participants present a layer of complexity to Ong’s formulation. In this section, passports are not just a material resource that people want to accumulate as part of their flexible citizenship: they can also serve as discursive resources—signs—that they can use to index their identities during the interview. My participants can imply indexical connections between passports and citizenship based on what they have experienced or felt as new citizens. The indexical value of the passport suggests that passports are not just about economic or political power and recognition; rather, they can become a representation of mobility, citizenship, and identity. Through this indexicality, drawn from my participants’ accounts of their experiences and emotions as new citizens of Singapore, we can understand how talks about

passports enable my participants to present themselves as new citizens who effectively negotiate the global and the local: their mobile lives and global orientations are not incompatible with their Singaporeanness.

## **6.5. Conclusion**

This chapter examined interview narratives that show how my participants talk about citizenship and examine how they used various the signs of family and passport to present themselves as new citizens during the interview. Because these interviews involved accounts of lived experiences and emotions in relation to the citizenship journeys of my participants, affective and experiential dimensions of the notion of citizenship were foregrounded. These dimensions tend to be erased in public media discourses in Singapore that are inclined to put the legal aspects of citizenship on the foreground and push its emotional and everyday aspects to the background. I argue that citizenship should not just be understood in relation to its legal and political aspects or its relationship to economic accumulation (cf. Ong, 1999). Rather, it should be understood based on how it was claimed to be felt, experienced, and lived. This supports Milani's (2017a) view on the need to also examine the affective aspects of citizenship to better understand how citizenship is idealized, called into being, or performed by people who feel its relevance to their lives.

I showed how my participants used different signs—specifically, family and passports—to present themselves as rooted and mobile new citizens. The interview narratives show that rootedness and mobility are an integral part of being a new citizen of Singapore: through these, the

participants in this chapter presented themselves as new citizens who balanced the global and the local. Sometimes they may claim they are both and sometimes they claim that one reinforces the other. Both are examples of how they make sense of citizenship. The narratives of the participants in this chapter seem to reflect but also challenge public discourses (e.g. Goh, 1999) that characterize (local-born) Singapore citizens as either as either heartlander (“local-oriented”) or cosmopolitan (“global-oriented”) by introducing the idea that some new citizens may strategically negotiate their position between the local and global to position themselves as new citizens who adhere to the expectations of the Singaporean state and its local citizens. By presenting themselves as rooted and mobile during the interviews, my participants were also able to present themselves as new citizens who are local- and global-oriented.

The metapragmatic approach can help us understand how this indexical process works. Because the notion of citizenship, the very topic of these interviews, runs through the accounts of lived emotions and experiences that my participants claimed to have had as new citizens of Singapore during the interview, the signs of family and passports can be viewed as within the semiotic range of citizenship (Agha, 2007). After all, these signs were specifically invoked while my participants were aware that the interviews were about citizenship. My participants typify the signs of family and passports as indexes of citizenship in ways which are rather different from how they are treated in dominant discourses on the global and the local in Singapore. They do not dismantle these dominant indexicalities. Rather, they reconfigure them to present themselves as new citizens who aim to do

something about the global-local tension. In doing so, they provide a way of understanding citizenship: it is a notion that must be approached with respect to accounts of lived experiences and emotions.

Because these signs were embedded in my participants' accounts of lived experience and emotions, these signs showed that my participants formed the indexicality between family/passports and citizenship from their own perspective. We understand how these signs generate such indexical capacity based on what my participants claimed to have experienced or felt about them (cf. Johnstone & Kiesling, 2008). Hence, people were able to position themselves in relation to the notion of citizenship through these accounts. Through these signs, my participants were able to present themselves as citizens who negotiate the global and the local—concepts which are salient in citizenship-based discourses in Singapore.

While everyday multiculturalists (e.g. Wise & Velayutham, 2009; Wise, 2009; Watson, 2009; Harris, 2009; Colombo, 2010) pay attention to how people reflect and contribute to different principles of diversity and its management from the perspective of praxis, they do not explore how people's everyday realities relate to the construction of the notion of citizenship. A metapragmatic view that zooms into the implications of people's accounts of their experiences and emotions does this by focusing not just on how citizenship affects everyday living but also shows how traditional signs of citizenship can be reconfigured in narratives of self-presentation. While it remains a salient political category that segments members of society, as a notion, it is also continuously contested, negotiated, and challenged by people who grapple with its implications on an everyday basis.

By presenting themselves this way, the participants in this chapter were able to position themselves in relation to regimes of citizenship. New citizens are not just passive subjects of regimes of citizenship; they can reconfigure citizenship discourses as well in their narratives. This provides a clear contrast to the representations of “new citizens” in Chapter 5. Moreover, studies that do not attempt to bridge different discourses—such as those that solely focus on how migrants are represented in public media texts or exclusively examine the ideological problematique of citizenship regimes without taking into account the uptake of the supposed subjects of such citizenship regimes, such as many studies on citizenship debates and tests—tend to ignore the co-constitutive relationship of citizenship and everyday life. The metapragmatic view opens ways of imagining how new citizens make sense of citizenship and their position in Singapore society as new citizens. I continue this exploration in the next chapter, where I discuss how my participants negotiate difference, which enables them to present themselves as good new citizens of Singapore.

## **Chapter 7**

### **New Citizenship and the Negotiation of Difference**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter investigated how my participants, through their accounts of the emotions and lived experiences that they had as new citizens of Singapore, presented themselves as new citizens who negotiate the global and the local during the interview. This provides insights into how new citizens talked about the notion of citizenship in Singapore by showing how experiential and emotional articulations of citizenship could facilitate the contestation of the global-local dichotomy that underpins statal narratives about citizenship in Singapore. This chapter continues this investigation by examining how my participants negotiate the notion of difference in the interview and observational data, which allows them to present themselves as good new citizens of Singapore. The experiences of my participants with the notion of citizenship—such as deciding to apply for Singapore citizenship after careful deliberation, undergoing the highly regimented citizenship application process, and living in Singapore not just as immigrants but as new citizens—place them in a position that requires the strategic styling of their identities as new citizens.

The differences that I talk about in this chapter stem from the newness of the citizenship of new citizens. My participants talked about their lives in the interviews and conducted their behaviors during my observations with the self-awareness that there is something different about them—something that makes them stand out from other residents of Singapore, such as local-born



Singaporeans or foreign citizens. Hence, I explore how the differences they claim to negotiate relate to their self-presentation as good new citizens of Singapore. I also pay attention to how the negotiation of difference relates to how dominant ideologies such as multilingualism and multiracialism are operationalized in Singapore society.

In this light, this chapter investigates three major themes. The first theme revolves around the acceptance of and satisfaction with linguistic practices in Singapore. In this section, I investigate metapragmatic commentary on English and Singlish, as well as the linguistic performances of my participants, and assess how their language ideologies and performances reflect broader debates about the role of English, Singlish, and multilingualism in the landscape of Singapore citizenship. The second theme is about the de-emphasis of difference. In this section, I examine how my participants deal with the need to de-emphasize markers that they deem incompatible with Singapore. I explain how this is not necessarily viewed by my participants as an imposition on them as new citizens: rather, they may also willingly subscribe to the view that markers must be de-emphasized and even link the said markers to their self-labeling and pride. Finally, the third theme is about the highlighting of difference. In this section, I explain how my participants display and emphasize aspects of themselves which supposedly make them different. Because this relates to the ideology of multiculturalism in Singapore, new citizens can present themselves as legitimate members of Singapore society.

These accounts reflect how my participants position themselves with regard to others in Singapore society and how they deal with the impact of

their new citizenship status on the level of the everyday. In a way, these accounts can be seen as their way of achieving certain social goals. These goals are not necessarily about making claims of their political or legal rights (cf. Isin and Nielsen, 2008; cf. Stroud, 2001; Milani, 2017b; Fairclough, Pardoe, & Szerszynski, 2006). Rather, these goals are about new citizens' ways of claiming their new citizenship status as a means of making sense of, and making others understand, who they are, as a way of living their everyday lives as new citizens in Singapore. This means that the claims made by my participants may be subtle and banal. However, this does not mean that they do not have to do with broader aspects of power that permeate the discourse on citizenship in Singapore. The way the participants negotiate their difference in the interviews may be seen as a response to tensions about their new citizenship: on the one hand, they are expected to assimilate into Singapore society; on the other hand, they are supposed to represent Singapore's value of multiculturalism and inclusion through their difference. Hence, how my participants claimed to negotiate difference may be a way of negotiating a subtle position within this contradiction.

## **7.2. Metapragmatic Comments on English and Singlish**

In this section, I talk about two points. The first is about linguistic practices—specifically those involving English and Singlish<sup>47</sup>—and how my

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<sup>47</sup> As I discussed in Chapter 3, sociolinguists have problematized the boundaries between languages and reject the view that languages are fixed systems that can be easily differentiated or compartmentalized from each other (see Blommaert, 2010, among others). As a sociolinguist, I agree with this point. The discussion in this chapter about English and Singlish are based on what my participants talked about during the interviews: they seem to view them as different from each other and as separate systems. Hence, the

participants talked about Singlish<sup>48</sup> and the role it plays in their everyday lives as new citizens. English and Singlish play an important role in the constitution of Singapore as an imagined community: (standard) English represents a globally oriented multiracial society and Singlish represents the distinct local identity that new citizens are expected to adopt and assimilate into (see Alsagoff, 2010).

Because language plays a key role in the management of diversity, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, it is important to investigate how my participants talk about the role of language in their lived experiences as new citizens. As Heller (2001) argues, “language is both a key domain of struggle over difference and inequality, and a means of conducting that struggle” (p. 120). Hence, it would be important to see how this becomes evident in the metapragmatic comments and linguistic performances of my participants.

#### 7.2.1. Patterns of Attitudes Towards English and Singlish

All my participants talked about languages, especially English and Singlish, across the different stages of the interviews, such as:

1. in their responses to the question of what languages do they speak (Interview Part I);
2. in their discussions of the struggles that they faced when they were new in Singapore (Interview Part II);
3. in their discussions about language (Interview Part V).

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discussion in this chapter follows their logic. To my participants, for instance, “Singlish” can be a language, a variety of English, an accent, a style, and others.

<sup>48</sup> Singlish is referred to as Colloquial Singapore English in the linguistics literature. I use “Singlish” in this chapter because it is the term that my participants used.

Because the interviews were semi-structured, language was also discussed in other parts of the interview. There was no interview that did not include any discussion about English and Singlish.

At this point, I would like to present a few observations about how my participants generally talked about English and Singlish in the interviews. This would sensitize us to the general sentiments that my participants had towards the relationship of Singlish to new citizenship. The table below provides a summary.

Extract 18. Singlish and my participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Claimed to speak Singlish</b>	<b>New citizens should understand Singlish</b>	<b>New citizens should speak Singlish</b>	<b>New citizens should respect Singlish</b>	<b>New citizens should speak English</b>	<b>Spoke Singlish during the fieldwork<sup>49</sup></b>
Arya	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Arthur	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chad	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Isabel	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, slightly
Jenny	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jinky	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Joanna	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jose	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mandy	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mario	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, slightly
Nigel	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Patrice	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sharon	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, slightly
Skanda	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

<sup>49</sup> This is based on my own judgment as a long-term resident of Singapore. While I do not wish to make any claims about the extent of my participants' linguistic repertoires (e.g. how Singlish did this participant sound?), I have to acknowledge that my assessments of their Singlish are very subjective and based on my own perceptions. My only goal here is to describe my participants' repertoires in order to make sense of the implications of their different articulations of and in their linguistic repertoires.

Sophia	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Soraya	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Victoria	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yarn	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, slightly

A few points must be clarified about this table. The clarifications below also serve as a prelude to the following analysis of the metapragmatic comments on English and Singlish that my participants made.

1. I asked the questions above during the interview, but only after the participants brought up the link between English, Singlish, and citizenship on their own during the interview. 14 out of my 18 participants claimed that they know how to and that they generally speak Singlish. These participants are a mix of those who were raised in Singapore (e.g. Mandy, Patrice) and those who moved to Singapore when they were adults (e.g. Mario, Jinky). Of the four participants who claimed that they do not speak Singlish, two (Isabel and Sharon) claimed that they did not pick it up well enough and two (Nigel and Yarn) claimed that they resisted it because they did not see the need to learn Singlish when they can just use English in Singapore.
2. My participants had varying levels of competence in Singlish, based on my own assessment. All my participants who were previously Malaysian citizens (Jenny, Jinky, Victoria, Sophia, Patrice) claimed that they speak Singlish because it has many phonetic, morphological, and syntactic similarities with Malaysian English. Patrice was the only former Malaysian participant who did not make comparisons between Singlish and Malaysian English:

she was born and raised in Singapore. While my assessment of whether they spoke Singlish or not was generally consistent with their claim of whether they do, there were some exceptions. Isabel, Sharon, and Chad claimed that they do not speak Singlish but I thought they spoke it during the fieldwork (Isabel and Chad during the interview, Sharon during the interactional recording with her colleagues). Mario claimed that he spoke Singlish during the interview but I did not think he did. However, he used Singlish more, such as expressions and particles, during the interactional recording.

3. All my participants claimed that new citizens should know and speak English. They said that while new citizens may come from different linguistic backgrounds, they have to know how to speak English in addition to their mother tongues. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.
4. All my participants claimed that new citizens should respect Singlish because it is part of the way of life in Singapore. All of them also claimed that they should understand some bits of Singlish. While all of them claimed that Singlish is hard to acquire completely, they also claimed that new citizens should at least understand some of it. Only one participant, Joanna, argued that new citizens should speak Singlish. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

These preliminary observations provide an overview of how my participants discussed English and Singlish in relation to citizenship. Because

these comments occurred in the context of the interview which overtly probed into my participants' experiences as new citizens in Singapore, it is logical to assume that there is a connection between these metapragmatic comments and how my participants make sense of and present themselves as new citizens of Singapore. I explore this connection in the following section. I first provide a survey of the different attitudes that my participants had towards English and Singlish, based on what they explicitly said during the interview. This gives us an overview of the intersection of language and (new) citizenship. I then provide detailed analyses of excerpts from two participants—Mandy's metapragmatic comments on English and Joanna's metapragmatic comments on Singlish—to illustrate how metapragmatic comments reflect how they have internalized their positions as new citizens, and how this relates to the rhetoric of multilingualism in Singapore.

#### 7.2.2. Metapragmatic Comments on English

As I said in the previous section, all my participants (18/18) discussed the importance of English in citizenship affairs. In their discussions, they reproduced the government rhetoric on English, albeit in varying extents. Let us examine three examples that illustrate these extents, which adequately serves as a sample of the metapragmatic comments made by all my participants.

In the first example, Chad talks about how English and its official language status in Singapore facilitates interracial communication in Singapore. The extract below comes from our conversation about the lack of a language testing component in Singapore citizenship applications. His

rationale for saying that language tests are unimportant is based on his assessment that “most of the people speak English” (lines 6-7). Chad seems to accept this status as a matter of fact.

**Extract 19. Chad and English as an official language**

1	R: Do you think it's a good idea to not have it [a
2	language test]?
3	C: I think the official language is English,
4	although the so-called national language is Malay,
5	but the official language is English. So currently,
6	it's not causing any problem, most of the people
7	speak English, uh, it is the most widely acceptable
8	language to all the races, country of origin, to each
9	individual, so I think there's no problem with this.

None of my participants questioned this status of English in Singapore; in fact, they all expressed their approval of this, albeit in various extents. For instance, Mario thinks that everyone must speak English in Singapore, as we can see below.

**Extract 20. Mario: “Everyone must speak English in Singapore”**

1	R: How important is language to integration?
2	M: Maybe not everyone can speak Singlish.
3	Everyone must speak English in Singapore.
4	There is no other way. To maintain this society,
5	this communication between races.
6	[abridged: talk about a colleague]
7	Even for basic workers coming here, if they can
8	attend at least basic classes, maximize the
9	communication level. Other than that, you can't stick
10	to your own language. Otherwise there is always a
11	problem. I am facing that in my family, like my
12	mother-in-law doesn't speak English at all. She can
13	only speak Cantonese and Mandarin. She prefers to be
14	Cantonese. She's from Hong Kong originally.
15	Based on the society we're living in, majority of the
16	society has English knowledge.
17	Either local English, Singlish or normal English.
18	So everybody speaks English.
19	The language they speak must be English.

Mario, in this extract, reproduces the statal narrative of multilingualism espoused by the Singapore government: that is, while people are entitled to have their own mother tongues, everyone should learn English because it is a



neutral and effective lingua franca. While this was probably because we, upon his initiation, had talked about languages in earlier parts of the interview, his response here deserves further investigation because of how he said it: he uses the deontic modal “must” (lines 3 and 19) to assert his point. It seems that Mario views English as the only way to maintain intercultural communication in Singapore and the only solution (line 4: “there is no other way”) to potential communication problems. While he does not explicitly express negative sentiments towards his mother-in-law’s linguistic repertoire, she uses her as an example of a “problem” (line 11). His point about “basic workers” (i.e. low-skilled foreign workers) seems to suggest that people should be proactive enough in ensuring that they learn English and that it is their responsibility to should find ways to do this if they want to avoid problems.

The last example comes from Isabel. Like Mario, she argues that English is the bare minimum: given that not everyone can speak Singlish, it would be reasonable enough to expect people to speak English. However, while Mario states that any kind of English is acceptable (line 17), Isabel crafts her response around the idea that the government finds certain types of English more acceptable than others, even mentioning the Speak Good English Movement, as we see below.

Extract 21. Isabel: English “should be good enough”

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | R: So for new citizens, would it be good if they strive |
| 2  | to learn Singlish, try to speak it, try to understand   |
| 3  | it or would it be fine if they don’t, as long as they   |
| 4  | speak English?  |
| 5  | I: I know some Caucasians who can speak Singlish and    |
| 6  | when they speak they sound like almost Singaporeans     |
| 7  | in a sense. So I think it’s a good way to integrate.    |
| 8  | But I don’t think Singapore government is so keen for   |
| 9  | people to learn Singlish. I mean all these movements,   |
| 10 | Speak Good English Movement, I don’t think that’s one   |

11	of the key criteria that the Singapore government is
12	looking for. I think as long as you speak English it
13	should be more than good enough.

We can infer several things from these examples. First, my participants above affirm the dominant view in Singapore on the communicative value of English: everyone, including new citizens, must learn English because everybody in Singapore speaks English. This affirms the public perception of English in Singapore as “...the de facto working language of the nation” (Bokhorst-Heng, Alsagoff, McKay, & Rubdy, 2007). Second, they endorse the view that English is a neutral and effective lingua franca that facilitates interracial communication in Singapore. English is the bare minimum and there is no valid reason for not learning it, unlike other languages. For instance, Mario and Isabel acknowledge that while not everyone can speak Singlish, everyone should speak English. Additionally, Sharon separately mentions that she wished she knew how to speak Chinese as well, but she does not feel bad about not knowing Chinese because English is enough to get by in Singapore. My participants present themselves as new citizens who have met this bare minimum. Finally, the comments are guided not just by their own personal experiences (e.g. communication difficulties that they faced) but also by a conceptualization of what is compatible with Singapore’s multiculturalism. Thus, English seems to be the language that can downplay or offset differences.

The examples above provide an overview of my participants’ metapragmatic comments on English. To better explain the role of such metapragmatic comments to my participants’ positioning of themselves as new citizens who negotiate difference, I focus on one example below, which

comes from my interview with Mandy. I introduced her in Chapter 6. She was raised in Singapore, does not claim to have a strong association with her Filipino roots despite observing some norms and traditions at home, and calls Singapore “home.”

**Extract 22. Mandy's Metapragmatic Comment on English**

1	R:	How important do you think is language in being
2		a new Singaporean? For instance, like does it play a
3		big part in integration? You sound like a
4		Singaporean, I would say. But then, some people
5		don't, but they are Singaporean now. Do you think it
6		is important? Like, if you want to be a good
7		Singaporean?
8	M:	You should be able to communicate in English. In
9		Singapore, there's so many races, there's European,
10		there's Malay, Chinese. But then because of this, you
11		know, the Chinese superiority is going on like crazy.
12		There is this Chinese superiority because, you know,
13		the Chinese population is the greatest one here. And
14		then there's so many PRCs <sup>50</sup> in Singapore. And then
15		some of these PRCs don't know how to speak English
16		and they expect you to speak Chinese to them. That
17		kind of thing, that kind of shit. And that makes
18		other races angry. So if you want to work in
19		Singapore, or want to be a Singaporean, you have to
20		speak English. I think that's common. I wouldn't seek
21		respect, just common courtesy. I don't know the word
22		for it, but just, social etiquette. Like you are
23		coming into a country where the [pause]
24		ok, technically the national language here is Malay.
25		The national language is Malay. It [Singapore] is
26		like founded by a Malay Prince from Malaysia.
27		But then because of many races, you have to know
28		English. So you need to be able to learn and speak
29		English so you can integrate with the other races
30		because if you don't, like, there's just gonna be a
31		language barrier. And that's what the Singapore
32		government fights for. So, to be good new Singaporean
33		you have to be able to speak English, so you can talk
34		to other races. And that is what I say is a social
35		etiquette thing. Learn to adapt. Like, this is not

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<sup>50</sup> In Singapore, it is common for people to refer to citizens of the People's Republic of China as “PRCs.” Other terms include “China people” (lexically differentiated from Chinese Singaporeans) and “mainlanders.” While these terms are not semantically pejorative, they tend to evoke negative judgments or stereotypes.

Let us analyze how this extract tells us something about how Mandy presents herself as a new citizen in the interview. I explicitly asked Mandy if language is important in becoming a good (new) Singaporean. Mandy does not just respond with a general discussion of the importance of language: she prescribes English, which we clearly see in lines 18-20. Similar to Mario, Mandy repeatedly uses modals and modal auxiliaries that carry deontic meaning such as “should” (line 8), “have to” (line 19), and “need to” (line 28). Mandy not only describes the importance of English; she also states what she thinks people ought to do to become good Singaporeans.

She provides a few reasons for this. She discusses the importance of English as a lingua franca and for intercultural communication in Singapore (lines 9, 27, 29, 34), which my other participants also talked about. In lines 10-18, Mandy talks about “Chinese superiority” and the influx of immigrants from China into Singapore. While it was not clear what she meant with “Chinese superiority”—given that it can refer to the superiority of Chinese Singaporeans over non-Chinese Singaporeans or to the superiority of citizens of China over Singaporeans—the structure of her narrative seems to imply that it refers to the latter. We can also infer that Mandy seems to align herself with Singaporeans and distances herself from immigrants like the PRCs. In this discussion, Mandy implies that speaking English is not just about having a lingua franca; rather, it is about what speaking English stands for, such as “common courtesy” (line 21) and “social etiquette” (line 22). She expresses her dissatisfaction, possibly anger (line 18), with PRCs who do not know English (which she phrased as if it was by choice) and expect that people in

Singapore would talk to them in Chinese—which she refers to as “that kind of thing, that kind of shit” (lines 16-17).

Let us now interpret this data from a metapragmatic perspective to further understand how Mandy’s comments relate to citizenship. We can do this by looking at (1) how these metapragmatic comments say something about how Mandy construes citizenship and (2) how these metapragmatic comments enable Mandy to present herself as a good new citizen who negotiates difference.

We can address the first point by looking at how Mandy establishes indexicality in her narrative. Mandy seems to draw indexical links between language and citizenship, which is best exemplified by the conditional if-then statement in lines 18-20 (“So if you want to work in Singapore, or want to be a Singaporean, you have to speak English”). This establishes that citizenship should not just be understood as a status, but as a practice that is subject to negotiation. It also portrays English as a responsibility that comes with the status of citizenship. Moreover, this foregrounds English as the most salient index of citizenship (e.g. not appearance, not self-identification as Singaporean, not any other marker, but English). There are two sides to this indexicality: first, not speaking English can be an index of bad behavior that can evoke anger (line 18), or perhaps even superiority complex; second, speaking English can be an index of good citizenship. Through the metapragmatic comments that she made, Mandy was able to signify what good citizenship is, according to her standards. This indexicality becomes her basis for making evaluations about other people (e.g. PRCs) or particular linguistic behaviors (e.g. “that kind of shit,” line 17).

The second point can be addressed by examining how this narrative can serve as a sign that Mandy uses to present herself during the interview. Mandy uses linguistic resources such as deontic modal auxiliaries (lines 19, 27, and 33) to evoke a sense of responsibility to speak English. She uses pronominals to differentiate herself from PRCs, which evokes a sense of distancing. She also evokes a sense of authority through the imperative mood in line 35. Moreover, she aligns with Singapore by arguing that her opinions are consistent with “what the Singapore government fights for” (lines 31-32). These linguistic strategies enabled Mandy to present herself as a new citizen who has done this—as someone who knows how to manage difference and who can justifiably expect others to do the same. By presenting herself as someone who has negotiated difference, Mandy also presents herself as a good new citizen.

In this section, I showed how my participants’ metapragmatic comments on English allowed them to present themselves as new citizens who negotiate difference. In the following section, I discuss their metapragmatic comments on Singlish. This would give us a better understanding of the role metapragmatic comments play in my participants’ presentation of themselves as good new citizens during the interview.

### 7.2.3. Metapragmatic Comments on Singlish

Let us now examine my participants’ metapragmatic comments on Singlish. As I said in Section 7.2.1, all my participants (18/18) stated that new citizens should have at least a basic understanding of Singlish. Moreover, 17 out of my 18 participants said that new citizens do not need to speak Singlish

as long as they speak English. They claim that while Singlish can be a desirable addition to one's linguistic repertoires; it is not as necessary as English. In this section, I provide a few examples of metapragmatic comments made by participants on Singlish and explain how this relates the negotiation of difference and good new citizenship.

Like English, Singlish was described as an essential tool for everyday communication with Singaporeans. Isabel claims that Singlish is a nice add-on because everybody will be exposed to Singlish at some point. She also claims to appreciate people who at least try to speak Singlish even if "it is not their language" (lines 11-12). However, she cautions against showing off one's Singlish, which we see in the extract below. We will return to this extract at the end of this section.

#### Extract 23. Isabel and communicative value of Singlish

1	R: How about on a more personal level, I know that the
2	government doesn't like Singlish that much, but on
3	a more personal level, do you think it could help?
4	I: Yeah. I think it can help. Because then you can
5	interact more with your colleagues, classmates,
6	you can speak of at least when you can understand
7	Singlish, because chances are, you probably, you
8	hear it a lot. Speaking Singlish, but not to show
9	off because you don't want to appeal to many people
10	that you really know. So, if you meet someone who
11	doesn't actually mind trying Singlish when it is
12	not their language, I think is something
13	commendable.

Sharon shares this view. She adds that Singlish can also help new citizens understand Singaporean people and culture better, which we see below.

#### Extract 24. Sharon, Singlish, and Culture

1	A little bit of Singlish terms maybe that helps.
2	Because as I said it is not required but it depends on
3	your interest. If you really wanna learn more about

4 culture, I think it's a good way. And learning  
 5 Singlish, its background, the culture— it helps you  
 6 understand better where people and society are coming  
 7 from or it's the other way around. It will help you  
 8 integrate better.

While Isabel and Sharon assert that learning Singlish is beneficial to new citizens, they both state that it is optional: Isabel says just trying is enough and Sharon states that it is okay for people to not learn it if they are not interested in it. In the extract below, Mandy follows the same logic as Isabel's and Sharon's, but not completely. Unlike Isabel, Mandy does not seem to be concerned about whether someone is showing off his/her Singlish or not: she seems to be more concerned about being too reliant on English and not being able to switch to Singlish, which could result in “really, really, very weird” (line 15) moments. For Mandy, then, Singlish is not just about a matter of communicative convenience. It is also an index of one's desire to integrate into Singapore. The implication is that being able to codeswitch between Singlish and English would be ideal for new citizens—which she describes as “more power.” Being able to switch between Singlish and [Standard Singapore] English is a skill many Singaporeans are said to have (e.g. Alsagoff, 2010).

Extract 25. Mandy and Singlish as “More Power “

1 So, I think even you have Filipino accent and with  
 2 da bao<sup>51</sup>, like Singlish terms, it makes it more feel as  
 3 if you like...that's one thing that you cannot help but  
 4 to feel integrated, integrate to Singapore.  
 5 English is so normal like you see me  
 6 pwede na (trans: “it's okay enough”)  
 7 [abridged]  
 8 And then like it would be good for them to know and try

<sup>51</sup> The Singlish term “*da bao*” (打包; da3 bao4), which originates from Mandarin, means “take away” (food). Because I do not speak Chinese, I consulted a Chinese-speaking Singaporean friend on the orthographic and tonal representation of *da bao*.



9 to integrate that to their daily language so that  
 10 you'll find a safety, I don't know, find a safe gate.  
 11 Cause if you try, and you try to communicate and speak  
 12 proper English now, like now I'm speaking proper  
 13 English, right? If you speak English in a proper  
 14 conversation, on a daily basis, it's very weird.  
 15 It's really, really, very weird.  
 16 Unless you like some CEO or even though high-ranking  
 17 People, like, do speak English like Singaporeans.  
 18 They speak like, "what time we meet?"  
 19 They speak, like, still broken English. So even if  
 20 you speak good English, and then you try to integrate,  
 21 these Singlish terms, it would be more power for you.  
 22 [abridged]  
 23 So yeah, it would be a more pleasant experience,  
 24 if they really want to integrate.

Chad provides another angle to the value of Singlish in social affairs. He claims that while people are now more open-minded about differences, Singlish might help avoid the possibility of being stereotyped (lines 13-14). While Chad does not provide details about this (e.g. stereotyped as what?), we can infer that he means being marked as different (based on line 14) and evoking stereotypes that are associated with these differences. While he distances himself from such people who stereotype others (lines 10-16), he posits that Singlish can serve as a resource that could prevent such stereotyping:

#### Extract 26. Chad, Singlish, and stereotyping

1 R: Uhm, do you think that newcomers, so, maybe  
 2 foreigners, new citizens or anyone not locally born  
 3 Singaporean should try to speak Singlish or with the  
 4 Singaporean accent?  
 5 C: Um, okay, again, I don't think whether should not or  
 6 should do is the question, I think that the reality  
 7 is if you speak Singlish, you have it easier to, to  
 8 place yourself immerse in the local community. Uh,  
 9 but if you don't, uh, for me, it's also not a  
 10 problem. If there's another foreigner who speak, uh,  
 11 another, Chinglish, the so-called Chinese-English,  
 12 I'm perfectly okay. But there are some, there are  
 13 incidents that, uh, people might stereotype, they  
 14 start to stereotype when they observe the difference.

15	So, I think it's easier to, uh, adapt to your local
16	community if you do, but if you don't, is also okay.
17	People, people keep their minds open now.

At this point, it becomes evident that while Singlish is described as an optional add-on, the justifications provided by my participants seem to suggest that it might not be completely optional. While it might be optional in terms of conducting basic conversations with people from other linguistic repertoires, it seems to be essential in other matters, such as what my participants call “integration.” This can be seen in clarifying statements such as “I think the reality is if you speak Singlish...” (Chad) and conditional statements such as “if they really want to integrate” (Mandy).

There are two possible ways of interpreting this optionality. First, it is likely that claims about the importance of Singlish may have been downplayed by my participants because of my their awareness of common portrayals of Singlish as a “non-standard” variety in Singapore society, or even Singapore’s language policy, such as the rhetoric of the Speak Good English Movement (e.g. Isabel). Second, it could be that, as non-native speakers of Singlish, my participants highlighted this optionality to legitimize themselves as good new citizens. Saying that Singlish is absolutely necessary, even though they could not speak it well themselves, may undermine their own position as new citizens. Moreover, my participants—as seen from how they phrased their discussions—seem to position themselves as people who speak from experience, and as people who can credibly make evaluations on the role of language in citizenship and integration (e.g. “easier”). It even seems that the responses were crafted as advice to an imagined “you” persona, which somehow positions the speakers as credible sources of information, and by

extension, as good new citizens who are talking about what other new citizens ought to do.

To better explain the role of such metapragmatic comments to my participants' presentation of themselves as good new citizens, I focus on one example below, which comes from my interview with Joanna. The extract below took place in the middle of the interview, when Joanna had already talked about "integration." I introduced her in Chapter 6. She migrated to Singapore when she was 16. She claims to have strong emotional connections with both the Philippines and Singapore. She is fluent in Tagalog, English, and Singlish. While her Singlish accent has features that mark her as someone who did not acquire it from childhood such as her rhoticity<sup>52</sup>, her/our friends still describe her as "Singlish enough."

Extract 27. Joanna and sounding is feeling

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | R: Oh, cool. Uhm, how important do you think is      |
| 2  | Singlish, or sounding like a Singaporean, in a       |
| 3  | standard or a non-standard way, in integration?      |
| 4  | J: I think it's really important.                    |
| 5  | I think when you ask Singaporeans what defines them, |
| 6  | they usually say Singlish is the top marker,         |
| 7  | without second thoughts.                             |
| 8  | And it's something very interesting, like you can    |
| 9  | get away with looking like a particular race or      |
| 10 | whatever, but once you speak then people know.       |
| 11 | They might not know where you come from,             |
| 12 | but they would know if you're Singaporean or not.    |
| 13 | So I feel that, uh, certain like barriers are set    |
| 14 | out when you don't have that accent.                 |
| 15 | But I don't think it's as bad as like not being able |
| 16 | to speak English altogether. But you know, uhm, yeah |
| 17 | I feel like it's something that everyone strives     |
| 18 | for? Or, I don't know if this is true, but people    |

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<sup>52</sup> Joanna first learned English in the Philippines, which is a rhotic variety of English due to its American roots. Singlish and Standard Singapore English are both non-rhotic varieties due to its British roots.

19	would want to sound Singaporean in order to feel
20	Singaporean? Like my brothers <sup>53</sup> would change their
21	accents like really drastically. [laughs] And yeah,
22	I don't really know how comfortable I am with
23	hearing them talk like that, cos I know that, to me,
24	it feels strange, like it feels very fake. But at
25	the same time, maybe when I'm talking to my friends,
26	other people would also think that it's fake. But I
27	don't know. So it might not be necessarily fake, but
28	it is something that people want to do to integrate.

Joanna makes several metapragmatic comments about Singlish in this extract. First, she states that Singlish is the defining marker of Singaporeans (lines 4-6). This is based on her perceptions of what Singaporeans think—a point that she repeatedly made during the interview. Second, she asserts that Singlish can serve as a resource for the affirmation or contestation of racial identities in Singapore (lines 9-12): “people can get away with looking like a particular race” but their way of speaking would reveal whether they are Singaporeans or not. Third, she echoes the view made by other participants discussed above that not knowing Singlish would not be as bad as not learning English altogether. Finally, she discusses the possibility that Singlish is something that “everyone strives for” (lines 17-18). This is based on her view that sounding Singaporean is a prerequisite of feeling Singaporean. This implies that speaking Singlish can be construed as a performative act: it is by the act of speaking Singlish that makes the feeling of Singaporeanness come into being.

This is not to say that Joanna does not acknowledge the reasons for new citizens to not speak Singlish, such as those discussed above. Joanna’s background as a linguist is perhaps the most salient reason behind her

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<sup>53</sup> Joanna’s brothers are new citizens as well. One of them, Jose, also participated in this study.

sensitivity to the sociolinguistic issues in Singapore. She told me in the interview, which I agreed with, that while she knows Singlish morphology and syntax very well, her accent would still reveal that she has not been speaking Singlish since childhood. She said that Singaporeans usually call her out on her rhoticity—which I also noticed in my many years of being her friend. She added that there is a risk of overdoing it, which could result in “sounding fake” (line 26; cf. Isabel above), which implies that Singlish involves the performance of authenticity.

Does Joanna claim that new citizens should speak Singlish? The transcript below suggests so. While she hedges at first (lines 3-6), she states a clear negative sentiment towards people do not at least try to speak Singlish, which we see below.

Extract 28. Joanna, not trying Singlish, and distancing

1	R: So what do you think of new citizens who
2	don't even try [to speak Singlish]?
3	J: Well I think. I don't know. I don't know if they're
4	wrong, but I think they should try? [J laughs]
5	I guess there's nothing wrong with not trying,
6	but I feel that uhhh, people, like, maybe, because
7	I'm a linguist, that I, I can say things like this,
8	but I feel like people who, who don't adapt to the
9	accent are like distancing themselves.
10	So I feel like if you move into a new place,
11	you would, the natural tendency is to adapt the way
12	that they speak, and then if you don't, then it's
13	like an effort on your part? Something like that.
14	[J laughs] But yeah, I think everyone should just
15	try, it's quite fun, but I, I feel that just because
16	of the stereotypes of Singlish as well,
17	diba (trans: "right")?

Joanna provides a view that none of my other participants discussed during the interview: the idea that not speaking Singlish is a sign of “distancing themselves” (line 9) from Singapore. She naturalizes the

relationship of the length of one's residence period in Singapore to language learning; if this "natural tendency" (line 11) does not happen, then it means that the person is resisting it, and consequently, is actively distancing himself/herself from Singapore. While she recognizes that this comment could be attributed to her being a linguist—even though she hedges right before this claim (line 6)—she continues her discussion by saying that "everyone should just try" to speak Singlish anyway (lines 14-15): "it's quite fun" (line 15) after all. This affective evaluation of the process as "quite fun" can be seen as Joanna's way of positioning herself as someone who has actually done this: hence, she is not one of those people who distance themselves (line 9). By positioning herself as someone who has negotiated this linguistic difference, she was able to present herself as a good new citizen.

The examples above show that "trying" to speak Singlish is a desirable act on its own, which may even be as good as actually speaking Singlish given that actual performances of Singlish can backfire when they are construed as "fake" (e.g. Joanna) or "show[ed] off" (e.g. Isabel) by others. The metapragmatic reasons for this that my participants provided, such as the difficulty of mastering Singlish or its disputable perceived usefulness, point towards the idea that new citizenship is not about aspiring to pass off as a local-born citizen; rather, it is about trying to do their part as new citizens. This view departs from Piller's (2002) point, in her study about migrants' L2 acquisition, that the notion of "passing for" [a native speaker] is indicative of "success." While she characterizes passing as a "temporary, context-, audience- and medium-specific performance," passing still involves some level of cognizant and recognizable approximation of a certain goal—in the

case of her study, that goal is the native speaker. In the case of my participants' accounts, passing for is not the goal; it is just about trying. In other words, new citizenship may not be about the complete approximation of (local-born) Singaporeanness; rather, it may be about "just-enoughness." This is similar to Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) concept of "adequation," which "...emphasizes the fact that in order for groups or individuals to be positioned as alike, they need not – and in any case – cannot be identical, but must merely be understood as sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes" (p. 559).

This leads us to a few questions. How do new citizens show that they are trying? When one tries to speak Singlish by using several Singlish sentences, does that count as "trying?" Or does that count as speaking a bit of Singlish? Is any form of "non-native-like" Singlish considered "trying?" Does "trying" end when one achieves "native-like" competence in Singlish? These questions are difficult to answer because "trying" can both involve attempting or making an effort to do something (e.g. "I tried to go to the gym but I was too busy") and actually doing something (e.g. "I tried the bench press and it was fun"). While it is hard to pin down what "trying" to speak a language entails, it is undeniable that it has become part of my participants' narratives and subjectivities. Trying seems to be part of the subjective dimensions of their identity claims. While the extracts do not allow us to observe actual attempts of "trying," the fact that my participants make the claim that "trying is enough" in the context of the interviews is significant. The "trying is enough" view could give my participants—who are "non-native speakers" of Singlish—space to still claim status as a good new citizen. This would not

have been possible if the expectation was for all new citizens to speak “authentic” or “native-like” Singlish. Hence, this is a perfect example of how the participants negotiate sameness and difference: it is a way of framing their (inevitable) linguistic difference not as a matter of disintegration but as something that can be read as evidence of “trying.”

We can further unpack more implications of the “trying is enough” view on citizenship through a metapragmatic approach. The participants constructed themselves as good new citizens during the interview through different signs that carry indexical meaning. This indexicality is partly established through my participants’ making sense of public discourses around them: for instance, Isabel’s reproduction of the Speak Good English Movement rhetoric in her narrative reflects how her opinions on Singlish and English are influenced by the indexicality established by the Speak Good English Movement. Another example is Joanna’s comment that Singlish is a marker of Singaporeanness, which reflects how she makes sense of the indexicality of English established by public discourses in Singapore. However, these indexicalities can be contested by people: after all, “it is people’s lived experiences that create indexicality” (Johnstone & Kiesling, 2008, p. 29). This is where the “trying is enough” view becomes even more relevant. This view can be considered an attempt by people to reconfigure the indexicalities around them based on their understanding of their own backgrounds and positionality as new citizens. Through my participants’ awareness that they may have backgrounds that may persist to be different (e.g. not being able to pick up fully, being at risk of being viewed as “fake”), my participants create an indexical relationship between “trying” and “good



citizenship.” This not only reflects how they make sense of their positionality in Singapore; it also allows them to present themselves as good new citizens of Singapore during the interview. Given that this reconfiguration does not fully depart from or is contradictory to the public discourses of Singapore (i.e. they can be considered tweaked versions of the public discourses), they can still be considered as within the typification of the indexes established by public discourses in Singapore. Hence, they are still “coherently” (cf. Jaffe, 2016) understood in a semiotic sense as part of the “language → citizenship” indexicality. This tweaking is important because it shows that people are not passive subjects of public discourses; rather, they are active agents who can tweak indexicalities in their narratives to achieve goals, such as the presentation of themselves as good new citizens. This point, in addition to the discussion in Chapter 6, depart from the representations of new citizens as passive objects of state management policies identified in Chapter 5. This, I argue, is a good example of how my participants make sense of citizenship on their own terms.

This has an effect on how we can understand citizenship. Citizenship seems to be loosely conceived by people unlike other matters such as race, an important category in Singapore. For instance, race is an either-or category for which authenticity and fullness are crucial. Taking the CMIO as an example, one has to be authentically Chinese to be considered C; if not, s/he can end up being classified as O. However, citizenship as a category has fuzzy borders: while legally speaking, citizenship is an either-or category, the definition of a good or legitimate citizen does not seem to be. On the one hand, one must satisfy legal conditions (e.g. citizenship application process) which establish

his/her membership in that category. On the other hand, displays of citizenship are less rigid: trying, not full authenticity, seems to be the end-goal. The context of Singapore society may be facilitating this. While racial categories tend to be assumed in Singapore society as fixed and easily determinable, with little space for exceptions such as the case of mixed-race people, the definition of “Singaporean” is still being negotiated in Singapore society (see the discussion of the “Singapore core” in Chapter 2). This creates spaces for people to assert different ways of claiming Singaporeanness. These different ways of claiming Singaporeanness, when framed as efforts, become subsumed under the metasign of citizenship.

To conclude this section, I emphasize that the underlying issue with the metapragmatic comments on English and Singlish above is the negotiation of one’s difference in relation to local-born Singaporeans. This negotiation of difference goes beyond metapragmatic comments; my participants also employed other signs in their self-presentation as good new citizens. We will explore these other signs in the two following sections, where I discuss the de-emphasis (Section 7.3) and accentuation (Section 7.4) of difference.

### **7.3. De-emphasis of Difference**

While the previous section focused on how my participants talked about or even performed linguistic differences, this section talks about other attitudinal and behavioral differences that my participants claimed they had to de-emphasize, which facilitated their self-presentation as good new citizens of Singapore. Because of the way the participants are constantly positioned as different by society through the label “new citizen,” the participants often

faced much pressure to minimize their difference to show their adaptation to the Singaporean way of life; such downplaying of difference was often reflected in their narratives.

In the interviews, I asked my participants to describe a “model new citizen.” The responses, if interpreted from the perspective of the different approaches to diversity (see Chapter 3), range from assimilationist (e.g. Mario: “...just adopt the culture where you are and work like one of them and try to be part of this culture, part of this society...”) to multiculturalist (e.g. Jose: “I think my Filipino background is fine, I did NS, but I’m Filipino, and there is no problem with that...”) ones. Instead of determining what framework my participants use in their definition of the model new citizen, in this section, I examine the common denominator of their responses, regardless of where those may fall into the spectrum of the frameworks of diversity management: how my participants talked about the de-emphasis of difference as an integral part of the construction of the model new citizen identity. My perspective here takes the Singapore brand of multiculturalism (see Chapter 2) as a backdrop of my participants’ narratives. While this has been hinted at in the previous section, where I showed how my participants reconciled various ideologies about new citizenship that were reflected by their metapragmatic comments and linguistic performances, this section focuses on their accounts of how they de-emphasized attitudinal differences.

In the interviews, my participants highlighted a link between Singapore policies and their everyday lives as new citizens. They claimed that a model new citizen of Singapore should accept Singapore’s policies and espouse the

values that Singapore has built itself on. Let us examine a few examples of this.

Mario claims that new citizens should de-emphasize their attitudinal differences towards the Singapore way of life. We can see this in the extract below.

Extract 29. Mario and De-emphasizing Difference

1	Q: So you were talking about integration just now,
2	and then, how would you define a model new citizen
3	perhaps? Like, what does that person have to do?
4	A: Well, since you decide to be part of this society,
5	all your pride...put them aside and just adopt the
6	culture where you are and work like one of them and
7	try to be part of these culture, part of this
8	society. Just forget what you were, don't
9	concentrate on yourself, like "I'm different, I'm
10	different." You may come from a different
11	background, but you are not different. Just accept
12	of what you have here. Of course, you should not
13	forget your own personality, you can have your own
14	culture within the four walls of your home.
15	Just don't bring it up.

In line 5, Mario talks about “pride.” Pride here seems to refer to one’s persistence in affiliating with their former ways of life. Mario claims that new citizens should “put [pride] aside and just adopt the culture where you are” (lines 5-6). He adds that new citizens should just “forget what you were” (line 8). He claims that new citizens should not focus on their difference and should just “accept what you have here [in Singapore]” (lines 11-12). These statements imply that the de-emphasis of difference is integral to becoming good new citizens. He, later on, clarifies that people can still have their differences as long as they “don’t bring it up” (line 15). Mario’s statement can be considered assimilationist: a claim that new members of society must completely adapt, at least in public, to the host society.

Throughout the interview, Mario provided several examples of how he alters his attitudes and conduct as he lives his life as a new citizen of Singapore. One example—how Mario initially felt hurt when he had to sacrifice his being an activist—was already discussed in Chapter 6. The premise of this is his perception that his activism is incompatible with Singapore society. He asserted that there are fewer things to be activist about in Singapore than in Turkey—one example that he gave is that Singapore has peaceful elections, unlike Turkey where “election happens like a war”—and said that Singapore is not the best place to be an activist. While I was not able to probe into what he meant with the second sentence, I took it to mean that Mario was alluding to the complicated relationship of the Singapore government and dissent. What Mario claims here is that he had to let go of some markers of his past (i.e. activist engagements) when he decided to take up Singapore citizenship (see Chapter 6). He also implied that he had developed an attitude that puts Singapore above his other affiliations. For instance, he talked about his conversations with his local-born Singaporean colleagues about what they will do in case Singapore goes to war.

#### Extract 30. Mario and fighting for Singapore

1	R: How about your affiliation to Singapore, did it
2	Get stronger? Or weaker? When you became a citizen?
3	M: As Turks, we are quite easy-going people. So we
4	adapt to different culture and different locations.
5	And back in my Circassian block, where we live and
6	we earn our living, we are always loyal.
7	So in 1865 when Russian forced the Circassians to
8	move to Turkey and killed millions of us,
9	So the Circassians fight for the Ottoman without
10	knowing their language. So same thing.
11	When I come here, I really become part of it.
12	So when talking about the war, most of my colleagues
13	say if Singapore goes to war, I go China, I go

14	Australia. I said I am staying, I will fight,
15	then they said, what if Singapore fight with
16	Malaysia? Or any Muslim country.
17	The question is if I care?
18	My family is here. So I fight for my country.
19	So I will fight for this. I'll become part of it.
20	So the feeling is still there for my mother country.
21	But I am part of this society and
22	I will fight for it until the end.

In this discussion of what he thinks he will do in case of a hypothetical war, Mario claims that he will fight for Singapore. While he repeatedly claimed in the interview that he still has patriotic feelings towards Turkey, how he presents himself in this extract suggests a strategic presentation of himself to counter suspicions of disloyalty. He even implies that he is more loyal than his local-born colleagues (lines 12-14). He uses his Circassian heritage (lines 5-11) to present himself as a loyal citizen of Singapore. Moreover, he presents himself as someone who has re-rooted to Singapore—just like the Circassian people. He indexes this re-rootedness by saying that his family is in Singapore (line 18), which relates to my discussion in Chapter 6, which he then connects to his stance of fighting for Singapore (line 18). This seems to challenge traditional notions of citizenship that are based on local provenance, race/ethnicity, religion (line 16) or language (line 10). It seems that for Mario, it is his family-driven sense of (re-)rootedness that conditions his view of citizenship. This claim of allegiance, argued through the discussion of being (re-)rooted in Singapore, enabled Mario to present himself as a good new citizen of Singapore because he has done his part in negotiating difference.

We can gain more insights into Mario's narrative by adopting a metapragmatic perspective. What Mario does here is comparable to the

reconfiguration of indexical meanings of signs that I discussed in Section 7.2.3. Here, this sign is “Circassian heritage.” While Mario initially employs this sign to index his heritage, he then uses it to claim rootedness and loyalty in Singapore. He highlights this different heritage to claim sameness: as he claims, through his characterization of Circassian loyalty (5-10), “When I come here [to Singapore], I really become part of it.” Mario reconfigures the popular “loyalty → citizenship” indexicality in Singapore society—the dominance of which in Singapore everyday discourses is evidenced by how Mario describes this as a topic that he and his colleagues had—by indexing his loyalty through the sign of his Circassian heritage. This reflects how Mario can create indexicality through his understanding of his background and position in Singapore society. This strategy works because this reconfigured indexing of “loyalty” still falls within the semiotic range of citizenship. In other words, because this talk was framed (cf. Gal, 2016) as talk about citizenship, the sign of Circassian heritage still falls within the semiotic range (Agha, 2007) of, or are typified as about, citizenship. By viewing citizenship as a metasign (i.e. one that frames or regiments these other signs, such as “Circassian heritage” or “loyalty,” as part of its semiotic range), we can understand how Mario’s reconfiguration of indexicalities is semiotically related to how he presents himself as a good new citizen.

Another example comes from my interview with Sharon. As discussed in Chapter 6, Sharon foregrounded the role of pragmatic economic benefits in her decision to take up Singapore citizenship. These benefits were infused with affective and experiential considerations and were integral to how she claimed to index the identity of a new citizen who is rooted in Singapore while

simultaneously being cosmopolitan enough to maintain her ties with family or career networks overseas, which allows her to live her life as a new citizen of Singapore. In the extract below, Sharon talks about a different type of “pride.”

**Extract 31. Sharon, pride, and appreciation of privileges**

1 What would make that new citizen different from other  
2 people living here in Singapore? I guess one is pride  
3 that you live here as a new citizen.  
4 In terms of behavior or personality, that really  
5 depends on each person - it's not some kind of a  
6 uniform way of living. I think we value more, what  
7 you see around we appreciate more especially the  
8 privileges that we get. I think those are the things.  
9 One example of privilege is that my son goes to child  
10 daycare, my son gets a subsidy because am a working  
11 mom. When I was a PR, no subsidy, nothing like that.  
12 The other thing is that when we bought our place here  
13 in West Coast<sup>54</sup>, the additional stamp duty<sup>55</sup>, which is  
14 just like a tax, on the property is much higher for a  
15 PR to buy compared to citizens. So we still have to  
16 pay additional stamp duty but it was more than used to  
17 be compared to when we were PR.  
18 Things here and there we appreciate.  
19 I don't say it's a downside but it's part of the  
20 package you come to accept  
21 is the CPF [Central Provident Fund]<sup>56</sup>.  
22 Cause if you are PR and you decide to leave Singapore  
23 for good and you don't renew your PR, you can get your  
24 CPF. What you have put in there you can get back.

This extract was Sharon's response to my question that she reiterates in lines 1 and 2. While Sharon claims that behaviors or personalities do not have

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<sup>54</sup> West Coast is a geographical area in the western part of Singapore.

<sup>55</sup> For more information on stamp duties, see Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore (n.d.).

<sup>56</sup> The CPF is "...a comprehensive social security system that enables working Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents to set aside funds for retirement" (CPF Overview, 2018). Sharon's description of the CPF is factually correct: PRs can claim their CPF contributions if they decide to leave Singapore and renounce their PR status. While there are a few grounds (e.g. medical, housing) for citizens to withdraw a portion of their CPF prior to retirement, citizens generally have to wait for retirement to be able to claim their CPF contributions. For more information on the CPF, see CPF Members Home (2018).



to be erased (lines 4-6), she says something about attitudes towards living in Singapore. Her response to this question was linked to how she feels about her new citizenship: "...pride that you live here as a new citizen" (lines 2-3). She claims that it is that pride that new citizens ought to have. Sharon is not merely talking about new citizen pride as a feeling of accomplishment, pleasure, or satisfaction. Rather, she talks about pride as a feeling of being appreciative of the benefits that new citizens receive (lines 6-8). Hence, this pride is less about her own emotions per se and more about how she is supposed to feel about the privileges that she had been receiving because of her new citizenship. She gives two examples of these privileges: subsidies for her son's daycare (lines 9-12) and lower fees for public housing (lines 12-17). Sharon equates her appreciation of these benefits to pride. While not mentioned in the extract above, this point alludes to a feeling of indebtedness. Throughout the interview, Sharon repeatedly claimed that she felt indebted to Singapore for approving her application for Singapore citizenship. Hence, she even claims that she has "come to accept" (line 20) the fact that she now has to appreciate the CPF, even if she described it as a "downside" (line 19).

Hence, in this extract, Sharon presents herself as a good new citizen because she has developed pride and appreciation of the privileges that she receives as a new citizen. She presents herself as a new citizen who has come to terms with policies that she may not necessarily agree with, such as the CPF, and that makes her a good citizen. This is because new citizens are now citizens of Singapore, and part of being a citizen of Singapore entails the submission to these policies. By foregrounding the change of her attitude towards the CPF, Sharon was able to present herself as someone who is now

more in line with Singapore—an example of the negotiation of attitudinal difference.

The CPF was an issue that several of my participants talked about in the interview, which suggests that it is a policy that my participants consider relevant to their lives as new citizens. For instance, Mario shares the view that Sharon has towards the CPF. Prior to the interview recording, he already told me that the CPF initially held him back from applying for Singapore citizenship. He claimed that he did not agree with the CPF system at all: he said that the government should give its citizens the benefit of the doubt that they are responsible enough, and are willing, to save up for their own retirement. However, he said that he had to accept this system if he wanted to become a Singapore citizen: after the interview, he told me that he now thinks that the CPF is “not too bad.”

Let us now turn to the metapragmatic approach to further understand the relevance of Mario’s and Sharon’s narratives to the understanding of citizenship. Mario and Sharon both draw interdiscursive connections the state’s citizenship discourse, as seen in their narratives about war, loyalty, and CPF and other rights and obligations. This can be seen in the narratives of my other participants as well. For instance, Jinky takes pride in knowing that she deserves her Singapore citizenship because she has met the meritocratic requirements of the citizenship application process. Mandy, Skanda, and Arya claimed that good new citizens are those who espouse Singapore’s multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual values by actively condemning forms of racism that they encounter on the level of the everyday. Similarly, Sharon and Mario claimed that good new citizens are those who maintain

pragmatic mindsets as they continue their careers in Singapore. However, as the narratives show, the participants do not necessarily align their entire lives with these state narratives. Rather, they identify some aspects of their transnational selves that match that discourse and use those aspects as evidence of them being “sufficiently” good new citizens of Singapore. Through their understanding of their background and position as new citizens, they can reconfigure signs to present themselves as good new citizens. Accounts of negotiating difference—from public displays of difference to personal attitudes about policies—become typified as signs that are part of the metasign of citizenship. We continue to explore this in the following section, where I discuss how differences do not need to be de-emphasized all the time; sometimes, they can be accentuated too to index good new citizenship.

#### **7.4. Accentuation of Difference**

The two previous sections illustrated how my participants shaped their attitudes around their being citizens of Singapore. Their metapragmatic comments, linguistic performances, and discussions about the de-emphasis of difference showed us how they consider the new citizen as someone who tolerates, accepts, or embraces what they perceive as the Singaporean way of life. In this section, I examine instances when difference is accentuated as part of my participants’ self-presentation as good new citizens. This further establishes that my participants’ definition of the good new citizen is not about an unquestioned approximation of the way of life of the local-born Singaporean; rather, it is about finding their own spaces where they can present themselves as good new citizens.

My participants accentuate their difference through activities that allow them to present themselves not just as Singapore citizens, but as new Singapore citizens. By celebrating and performing their newness, new citizens can index a new citizen identity that could potentially expand the definition of Singaporeanness, which is consistent with the core tenets of everyday multiculturalism discussed in Chapter 3.

The first example of this comes from Arthur, Mandy's brother. While Arthur moved to Singapore when he was 7 (Mandy moved when she was 1), he still strongly identifies with his Filipino roots, unlike Mandy. His girlfriend during the time of the fieldwork was Filipino, his best friends are Filipinos (some are new citizens, some are not), he visits the Philippines often, and he speaks Tagalog. Mandy described Arthur and their other brother as "super *Pinoy*," which I discussed in Chapter 6. This does not mean to say that he is resistant to the Singapore way of life—he describes himself as very Singaporean even though he acknowledges that he still maintains emotional connections to his Filipinoness. Prior to the interview, he told me he was excited to meet me because I was Filipino myself. He has this desire to, according to him, "remember and reconnect with my roots." During the interview, he told me that while he completely adopted Singapore norms and customs when he was younger, especially right after they migrated to Singapore, he started "reconnecting" with his Filipino roots when he hit puberty. It was during this time when he became "more Filipino."

While Arthur has a full-time job in the computing industry, he participates in various beauty pageants and sometimes takes up modeling opportunities in his free time. Mandy described his brother to me as "very

good-looking,” a “crush *ng bayan*” (trans: “crush of the nation,” a common Tagalog expression), and as someone who has “very *Pinoy* features.”

I became Facebook friends with Arthur during the fieldwork and I followed his page throughout the years. I saw many of his modeling and pageant pictures. Below are two examples<sup>57</sup>:

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<sup>57</sup> I blacked out Arthur’s face to preserve his anonymity. In Picture 1, I also blacked out the license plates of the cars as well as the name of the building in the background for privacy reasons. Picture 1 was uploaded in February 2016 and Picture 2 was uploaded in July 2017. Arthur gave me his permission to use these pictures in this study.

Figure 6. Arthur in Filipino Attire



Figure 7. Arthur in Malay Attire



The first picture shows Arthur in a modern rendition of a traditional Filipino ethnic costume. He wore this in a pageant. The second picture shows Arthur in a *songket* (traditional Malay fabric commonly used by Singaporean

Malays) groom attire. He was a model in this picture. When I saw these pictures on my Facebook feed, even though it was after the completion of my fieldwork, I remembered my interview and conversations with Arthur about how his modeling and pageant involvements relate to how he sees himself as a new citizen, and his motivations for performing both his Filipino and Singaporean identities. Through these attires, he was able to multimodally index these identities. Arthur's choice to be involved in both Filipino and Singaporean projects that rely on archetypal multimodal signs such as attires affirms what he told me that he actively pursues modeling and pageant opportunities that allow him to perform these identities. Moreover, given that modeling and pageants are activities that are very audience-oriented—in this case, very Singaporean audience oriented—Arthur's claim that he finds pleasure in showing people his Filipino and Singaporean sides seems verifiable.

To understand how these modeling and pageant engagements relate to the notion of citizenship, let us zoom into how Arthur describes his motivations for participating in such events. After the interview, Arthur and I took the same train back to our own homes. It was during this train ride that Arthur and I became Facebook friends. He asked me to add him on Facebook, so I can see some of his modeling pictures. Because of this, we ended up talking about his modeling career. He said he does not receive a significant amount of compensation for these activities—he does it more for passion than for money. Moreover, other than the fact that he enjoys doing it, Arthur said that he had two other motivations for modeling. First, it allows him to meet Filipino models, which allows him to be more involved in the Filipino

network—in fact, he met some of his closest friends now through his modeling and pageant engagements. On a practical level, he said this allows him to be invited to events which are exclusive to Singaporeans and Filipinos, which increases his access to opportunities. He added that, on a personal level, he also enjoys joining Filipino pageants because it makes him feel more connected to his Filipino roots. He said he found joy in simultaneously reconnecting with his roots and displaying them to the Singaporean modeling scene. Arthur gave me an example: a month before I interviewed him, he had won a pageant for Filipino residents in Singapore. He said there was something about winning a pageant for Filipinos in Singapore, that was held in Singapore and attended by Filipinos and Singaporeans alike, that made him feel prouder of this experience than his other modeling and pageant stints. He said he felt like a “Singaporean Filipino,” a term he said he does not hear in Singapore.

Furthermore, Arthur said that modeling gives him a sense of satisfaction when Singaporeans appreciate his modeling work: while he may not “look Singaporean,” he finds pleasure in reminding people that there are other “types of Singaporeans.” He said that modeling enables him to send a message to his Singaporean audience that it is not how one looks—in this case, I took it to mean as looks based on race—that determines his Singaporeanness; rather, it is their pride in being Singaporean. He claims to enjoy performing his Filipino and Singaporean aspects in these engagements, giving him space to be both and to make people realize he is indeed both while being technically Singaporean.



Hence, performances of citizenship and their corresponding identities like these pave the way for Arthur to attempt to expand the notion of Singaporeanness. By giving a face to a minority group (i.e. “Singaporean Filipinos”) in moments that spectacularize looks, held in the locale of Singapore and usually catered to a Singaporean market, he gets to perform his identity and represent people like him.

Mario, my participant who used to hold Turkish citizenship, has a parallel perspective. When I went with him to his football match (discussed in Section 7.2), the first thing that I noticed was the shirt he was wearing. He was wearing a Turkish Telekom jersey that was used as a third jersey in the 2012-2013 season. A picture of Mario in the field can be seen below. It caught my attention because Mario, as discussed in Chapter 7.3, claimed in the interview (which happened prior to this football match) that new citizens should not perform their difference in public. I briefly remarked: “nice shirt!”. Because of that comment, Mario assumed I was a fan of Turkish Telekom. I told him I did not know about the team and that I do not follow football: I only occasionally watch the Premier League and the World Cup. This made him ask me why I thought it was a nice shirt. I said, “I haven’t really seen a Turkish jersey here in Singapore.” He smiled at me and said, “it’s the little things, you know?”. I was uncertain what he meant so I just gave him a blank stare. He said, “the little things that make you not forget who you are, the little things about you that people see.” Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of his teammate and his family. When the family left and while Mario was walking towards the entrance of the field, he winked at me and said, “See? Turkish Singaporean! Cool, right?”.

Figure 8. Mario's Turkish Telekom Jersey



While Mario's self-presentation here is more banal than Arthur's above, both examples are exhibitions of their cultural heritage or transnational identities which are markedly different from those of local-born Singaporeans. Let us unpack this idea further through the metapragmatic approach. These exhibitions of heritage or transnational identities can be described as "demeanor indexicals," which Agha (2007) defines as "any perceivable feature of conduct or appearance that contextually clarifies the attributes of actor to interactants [they are] *actor-focal* emblems; they clarify the demeanor of the one who performs the sign" (p. 240; italics in original). Heritage costumes or jerseys of football teams serve to clarify Arthur's and Mario's demeanor and social position to the Singapore modeling scene and local-born Singaporean football players, respectively. Hence, these exhibitions are both self- and other-oriented. Because it can be inferred that both Arthur and Mario frame these exhibitions as related to their new citizenship, as evidenced by their remarks that include "Singaporean Filipino" and "Turkish Singaporean,"

it becomes clear that Arthur and Mario create an indexicality between these exhibitions and new citizenship based on how they make sense of who they are and their position in Singapore society.

These acts, while clearly not attempting to pass for local-born Singaporeans, still work as citizenship-based identity work because of the nuances of the Singapore context. Because the statal narrative of multiculturalism continues to be dominant in Singapore, people like Arthur and Mario can still make bold claims about their being Filipino and Turkish without negating their being Singaporean. It seems to deepen the “Singaporean = CMIO demographic” narrative; while images of the CMI are preponderant in Singapore society, images of the O are not. As new citizens who fall under O, they have legitimate claims and viable opportunities to perform their O-ness without delegitimizing their Singaporeanness. While not all performances of O-ness can be automatically considered as legitimate claims of Singaporeanness—as Section 7.3 argues, some displays of O-ness may be perceived as incompatible with Singaporeanness (e.g. Mario’s narrative)—these acts can be considered legitimate because Arthur and Mario explicitly frame them as oriented towards their “Singaporean Filipino”-ness and “Turkish-Singaporean”-ness, respectively. These hyphenated labels serve as “designators” (Agha, 2007, p. 243) or markers of role and status of Arthur and Mario as new citizens who acknowledge or even flag their transnational heritage. Arthur and Mario seem to typify these markers as indexes of new citizenship and Singaporeanness—as signs that are typified and regimented as part of the semiotic range of the metasign of citizenship. The indexicality that Mario and Arthur establish are not inconsistent with Singaporeanness. This

can be interpreted as Mario's and Arthur's way of reframing the Singaporean discourse on multiracialism to legitimize their position as new citizens.

A comparable example comes from Nigel. He is my participant who used to be a German citizen. He told me that he routinely organizes costume parties at his home, where he invites his Singaporean friends to wear costumes based on different themes. He said that a staple theme of these parties is war. Nigel has an extensive collection of war uniforms—mostly German uniforms used during the First and Second World Wars but also includes contemporary ones. I asked him how his friends find these parties, and he said that his friends like them because they—the same people who always tell Nigel that he is more Singaporean than them due to his knowledge about and involvement in community work in Singapore—get to learn more about Nigel's German heritage. Nigel said that this was his primary intention for doing so. He said that because people will always see his white skin, he might as well embrace it and use it strategically: he adds, “they can see that I am also quite German, and that's fine because I am very Singaporean.”

He invited me to one of his parties, which I had to turn down because I knew that I would have had already been in London for the second half of my joint PhD at that time. I was saddened by that because I wanted to observe these parties. Nigel understood why I had to turn down the invitation and suggested that I wear a uniform from the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) after the interview so I would have a sense of what these parties are like. He took a picture of me using my phone and asked me to upload it on my

Instagram<sup>58</sup> so I would be able to, according to Nigel, share aspects of Germany with my friends. He even asked me to add hashtags in the caption of the picture—he specifically requested that I put #Germany and #Singapore in the caption, which I took to mean as related to the interview that we had just concluded. A screenshot of this can be found below:

Figure 9. Instagram Post: Myself in a DDR Costume<sup>59</sup>



Some of my friends messaged me on social media to ask why I posted this picture on Instagram, with messages ranging from “Are you in Germany?” to “Why are you wearing that in Singapore?”. This made me believe that this

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<sup>58</sup> Instagram is a social networking smartphone application/website. It is known for its photo- and video-sharing functions. Instagram is widely used in Singapore.

<sup>59</sup> I blacked out my Instagram username and the name of one of the Instagram users who liked my post out of personal preference.

is perhaps the reaction that Nigel had wanted—a discussion of the space for Germanness in Singapore, even in networks that he does not belong in. The examples above show that difference does not need to be de-emphasized all the time; rather, in some cases, they can be celebrated by strategically celebrating difference—which goes along with their newness as citizens—to come up with an expanded notion of Singaporeanness: the type of Singaporeanness that they can be part of and that they can contribute to.

While Nigel explicitly indexes his Germanness through these war-inspired costume parties at home, he does the same thing with his Singaporeanness. He described his house as “very Singaporean;” he even gave me a tour of his house to prove his point. His bookshelf had many books about Singapore history, biodiversity, politics, and photography. He had Singaporean memorabilia displayed all over the house, such as figurines of the Merlion<sup>60</sup>, antique china, fabrics and carpets, and Asian swords. His coffee tables had pictures of himself in different attractions in Singapore.

After the interview, he took me to the balcony and showed me two of his favorite books: a photography book that has images of colonial and modern Singapore and a cultural history book about minority ethnic groups in Singapore, such as the Bugis, Javanese, and Balinese. I even felt embarrassed when he started quizzing me about my knowledge of Singapore. He laughed at my embarrassment and told me that I should not feel bad because I was able to answer more questions than his Singaporean friends. He also told me about the various events that he had been organizing at his volunteer groups for the 50<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The Merlion, a half-mermaid, half-lion creature, is perhaps the most quintessential national symbol of Singapore.

anniversary of Singapore (SG50), consistently using “we” (e.g. “*We* are turning 50 this year!”, “Can *we* adapt to globalization?”, “*We* try to help each other here”) when he talked about Singapore and Singaporeans.

His bedroom also had many emblems of Singapore. The wall behind his bed was covered by a huge Singapore flag. His study table had commemorative SG50 scarves and banners. The styling of the room seemed very intentional to me—he even asked me if my room décor can beat his, which I just answered with a laugh.

The most noticeable décor in his room is a life-sized mannequin right next to his bed. It was dressed in a German World War II uniform. He said that he regularly changes the uniform of the mannequin—all the uniforms were stored in his walk-in closet. He told me that his friends usually go to his bedroom to change into the war uniforms when he hosts his costume parties, which means that his friends also see the mannequin given that it is the most conspicuous feature of his bedroom. While I was initially surprised, and perhaps found it weird, to see the uniformed mannequin in his bedroom, Nigel’s enthusiasm when talking about the mannequin made me think that he was just very passionate about and proud of his collection.

Let us discuss these examples using the metapragmatic approach to understand how they relate to citizenship. Nigel’s house seems to serve as a site of a constellation of different signs: German military uniforms may be seen as obvious markers of Germanness while Singaporean flags and other memorabilia may be considered markers of Singaporeanness. Nigel frames them as indexes of both. He seems to have typified the constellation of these signs as markers of who he is: a person who used to be German but is now a

Singapore citizen. These signs seem to coherently cluster together (cf. Jaffe, 2016) as a collective index of how Nigel views and presents himself as a new citizen of Singapore. The signs do not seem to be incongruent with one another; rather, they seem to be complementary. When examined on their own and out of context, these signs may be construed as belonging to different clusters (i.e. German vs. Singaporean). However, their co-existence at the very context of Nigel's flat, complemented by our knowledge of who Nigel is and how he presents himself, we can see that they are coherently typified within the same "field of indexicality" (Jaffe, 2016). They can all be understood as signs subsumed by metasign of Singapore citizenship. This typification can be seen as a reflection of how Nigel makes sense of who he is and what his position is in Singapore society. This seems to work well for Nigel: after all, his friends call him more Singaporean than them. Hence, they function as signs that Nigel uses to present himself as a good new citizen of Singapore. His strategic exhibition of his O-ness does not seem to be incongruent with Singaporeanness.

Within the intimate setting of the home, Nigel can construct a space that reflects his position as a new citizen. He can be very German and very Singaporean at the same time—an opportunity that he can take advantage of as he lives his everyday life in Singapore. The way he styled his home is both other- and self-oriented. When people see his flat, they get reminded that Nigel is both German and Singaporean. Moreover, it reflects how his identity as a new citizen of Singapore consists of the intersections of place (i.e. home), time (i.e. past and present of Nigel), and his former and current citizenships.



Moreover, Nigel's presentation of himself as someone who is knowledgeable of Singapore and actively involved in grassroots organizations, volunteer groups, and the police force is consistent with public discourses about citizenship, such as the components of the Singapore Citizenship Journey (online course, meeting with community leaders, experiential tours; see Chapter 2 for more details). He was able to present himself as someone who adheres to common expectations of what good new citizens are. However, he does not simply subscribe to these discourses; he also tweaks them in accordance with his background as a new citizen, as we see in his displays of racial difference and German heritage. These accentuations of difference seem to challenge Singaporeans to expand their notion of citizenship, which public discourses on new citizens may not (yet) be prepared to do.

The discussion above is based on what Nigel says about what his war memorabilia supposedly represent. However, it must be noted that these resources, from a metapragmatic perspective, carry more semiotic potential that Nigel does not (or perhaps chooses not to) acknowledge. For instance, while one can argue that the Singapore flag may indeed be an example of a banal display of Singaporeanness (cf. Billig, 1995), which is what Nigel seems to imply, one can also argue that this sign could represent nationalist and exclusionary sentiments, which he does not seem to imply. This becomes more problematic when analyzing Nigel's war memorabilia as markers of Germanness. War memorabilia represent a specific type of Germanness—one that has a violent and oppressive history. For instance, his World War II uniforms literally point toward not just Germanness, but Nazi Germanness.

This type of Germanness is what caused the Holocaust and similar atrocities all over the world. Moreover, the DDR uniform that he asked me to wear represents a regime that brutally oppressed East Germans and even murdered people who attempted to leave the DDR. From a metapragmatic perspective, it is important to acknowledge that semiotic resources such as war memorabilia have historical and ideological loadings.

At this point, we must ask—does Nigel’s claim that these resources represent his Germanness include this particular type of Germanness? Is this the type of Germanness that is performatively called into being when he organizes his costume parties with his Singaporean friends? This will be difficult to ascertain for two reasons: first, we do not know what Nigel really thinks of his war memorabilia and we only rely on how he describes them; and second, I was not able to attend any of these costume parties. However, based on my own ethnographic understanding of Nigel’s mindset, there is enough reason for me to believe that Nigel does not aim to glorify or aggrandize the violent historical loadings of his war memorabilia. During the interviews, for instance, he did not make any claims that would make me think otherwise. He adamantly claimed during the interview that he enjoyed living in Singapore and in London (where he lived before moving to Singapore) because of their respect for diversity and multiculturalism. He also repeatedly claimed that he appreciates how Singapore society values fairness, equality, and meritocracy. These are principles that may be deemed incompatible with being a Nazi Germany or DDR fan or apologist—although they may very well not be. Hence, there is enough reason to believe that the Germanness that Nigel refers to is based on a loose interpretation of the indexicalities of the war

memorabilia. Moreover, it is also possible for Nigel's friends to not notice the problem with the indexicalities of these war memorabilia. They may think of these costumes and costume parties as just fun events that they attend to spend time with Nigel, their friend. Moreover, the historical and ideological loadings of these war memorabilia may have been normalized to them. In Singapore, topics such as military conscription and possibilities of war are commonplace (see the example from Mario in Section 7.3). In fact, every year, the showcasing of newly acquired military weapons and the celebration of Singapore's military prowess remains central in the state-organized National Day celebrations. This is not to claim that all displays of war memorabilia are equally problematic; Singapore has never been involved in atrocities as grave and condemnable as the Holocaust. This is not to completely exonerate Singapore—Singapore is also responsible for reprehensible activities, such as remaining the biggest investor in Myanmar despite the Rohingya crisis (Thiha Ko Ko, 2019) and even selling military weapons to the Myanmar armed forces (Aung Zaw, 2001). However, it is the normalization of such practices of banalizing the indexicality of war that could lead to the interpretation of Nigel's war memorabilia as just about Germanness—a type of Germanness that does not include the indexicalities of Nazism and communism. While it would be difficult to ascertain what the case really is, Nigel's reflexive linking of war memorabilia to his Germanness could be interpreted as his way of emphasizing his Germanness—a type of Germanness that does not necessarily equate to being a Nazi or DDR supporter—and telling people that it could co-exist with his Singaporeanness.

The examples above lead us to one question: are these acts simply transitional? On the one hand, it can be argued that these moments could be ludic and fleeting; that they are confined to the particular space and time where they occurred, and the effects they generate are momentary. While they could be indeed, fleeting acts are not inconsequential (cf. Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010, p. 226): larger social issues such as power, identity, or change can be embedded in seemingly mundane or transitional forms. Moreover, even if we assume that the other-oriented effects are momentary, we cannot conclusively claim that the self-oriented ones are—fleeting acts like these may have a significant effect on how people come to terms with themselves. On the other hand, it can be argued that acts like this can be routinized and systematically re-enacted: uniforms can be worn repeatedly, pageants can happen often, themed house parties can be organized frequently. I cannot definitively claim which one it is. However, either of the two perspectives provides valuable insights into the examples above because they crystallize the point I have tried to make in this thesis: that citizenship is a result of processes of negotiation.

## **7.5. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explained how my participants' narratives about the negotiation of difference enable them to present themselves as good new citizens of Singapore. By looking at metapragmatic comments about English and Singlish and accounts of de-emphasis and accentuation of difference, I showed how my participants indexed a good new citizen identity based on

how they make sense of who they are, what their roles in Singapore society are, and of dominant discourses about citizenship in Singapore.

I showed the relationship between narratives about negotiating difference and the understanding of citizenship in Singapore. For my participants, receiving their Singapore citizenship is not the end of their journey to becoming Singapore citizens. Rather, it is the beginning of a new chapter in their lives when they have to constantly live with their new citizen status. It is the contradiction between the expectation that new citizens should assimilate to Singaporean culture and new citizens' constant positioning as different but supposedly welcome nonetheless, because of the rhetoric of multiculturalism, that makes my participants strategically claim that they are "Singaporean in their own way." To my participants in this chapter, aspiring to pass for a local-born Singaporean is not the definition of a good new citizen; rather, it is about contributing to Singapore in their own way—in a way that works for them. They may affirm the "English is essential" view because they speak English and support the "trying is enough" view because they know that they are still markedly different—and in the process of doing so, they contest the tensions of sameness-difference and still claim status as legitimate and good new citizens of Singapore. This perspective tends to be excluded from mainstream discourses on citizenship in Singapore. This relates to a point made by Fairclough, Pardoe, and Szerszynski (2006):

One way of reading this emphasis on citizenship as a communicative achievement is that it is an attempt to get us away from preconceptions about what citizenship *is*, and to force us to look at how it's *done* -- at the range of ways in

which people position themselves and others as citizens in participatory events (p. 98; italics in original).

In this chapter, I also demonstrated how the metapragmatic approach can help us understand the discursive construction of citizenship. I showed why it is important to examine people's accounts of how they experience and perform citizenship. While they may reflect indexicalities incorporated in dominant discourses about citizenship in Singapore society, they also reconfigure them based on their own positionalities. This point is important because of two reasons. First, the metapragmatic approach provides a perspective that we can use to understand the discursive construction of citizenship by paying attention to how various signs become coherently understood as about "citizenship." This chapter shows why we cannot assume what signs can mark good citizenship are; for instance, doing so would have made us miss how Circassian or German markers become signs of Singaporeanness. Rather, we must understand how different practices (e.g. metapragmatic comments, accounts of de-emphasizing difference, styling a house in a particular way) become indexes of citizenship. This approach helps us understand citizenship from the perspective of the people who experience and perform it. Second, this chapter shows us the active role that people have in constructing, reconfiguring, and typifying indexicalities. It provides the necessary concretization and contextualization of how metasigns work: people call signs into being, typify these signs as indexically coherent, and regiment them as signs that belong to the metasign of citizenship. Because "indexical relations are forged in individual's phenomenal experience of their particular sociolinguistic worlds" (Johnstone & Kiesling, 2008, p. 29), understanding

people's accounts about the negotiation of difference provide a good illustration of the many ways that citizenship can be constructed.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

#### **8.1. Summary of Findings**

This thesis aimed to understand how the notion of citizenship is discursively constructed in Singapore. In Chapter 1, I began the thesis by explaining my rationale for doing this research: my academic training and personal experiences as a foreign resident of Singapore have sensitized me to social issues revolving around citizenship and made me curious about how my training as a sociolinguist can enable me to answer questions I had about the tensions that arise from various articulations of citizenship in Singapore. The decision to embark on this research journey was guided by literature from various disciplines, such as sociology, geography, political science, anthropology, Singapore studies (Chapter 2), and sociolinguistics (Chapter 3).

In Chapter 2, I laid out the backdrop of this topic: the nature of immigration in Singapore, the citizenship policies that arose from it, and recent scholarship from the social sciences about Singapore citizenship, good citizenship, and transnational identities. While the studies reviewed here provide a good frame for the understanding of citizenship in Singapore, they tend to be focused on the perspective of the Singapore government (e.g. Han, 2000; Sim, 2008; Tan, 2008) or non-citizen migrants (e.g. Liu, 2014; Yeoh & Huang, 2000; Tan, 2014). This focus misses the perspective of the new citizen, who is not as “foreign” as migrants but not as “local” as local-born Singaporeans, which means that they may have a significantly different perspective on language and citizenship. Moreover, these studies tend to be



premised on the assumptions and implications of *difference* and not on how people partake in the process of *differentiation*. They revolve around how the state attempts to mitigate the challenges arising from difference or how people adapt to difference and neglect how processes of differentiation influence our understanding of citizenship and how new citizens orient their everyday lives to the discourses around them. For instance, the reviewed research on official and everyday discourses about citizenship lack attention to the uptake of new citizens. While statal and public media narratives can indeed be influential, or even imposing, they do not completely eliminate spaces for people to circumvent, contest, or reconfigure them.

Chapter 3 continued the literature review by shifting to research on language, diversity management, and citizenship. Current frameworks in diversity management, mostly originating from Western contexts (e.g. Glazer, 1997; Kivisto, 2012; Taylor, 1994; Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010), do not sufficiently account for the material conditions in Singapore or other city-states that aspire to simultaneously forge a local identity and a cosmopolitan image. Moreover, these studies treat language as a fixed and easily determinable social variable, a view which sociolinguists have long problematized as divorced from actual language use. In addition to this, although the literature on language testing (e.g. Extra, Spotti, & Van Avermaet, 2009; Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero, & Stevenson, 2009) provide good explorations of the interface between language and immigration policy, they do not directly apply to Singapore because of its lack of a language testing component. In addition to this, while research on the representations of citizenship categories in public media texts (e.g. Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008;

Gales, 2009; KhosraviNik, Krzyzanowski, & Wodak, 2012) provide good accounts of how linguistic devices can be employed to negatively portray immigrants, they tend to focus on what the resulting representations are or how such representations are formed without investigating the uptake of the very people who are supposedly the victims of such negative representations. Finally, I reviewed sociolinguistic studies that explore sociolinguistic issues related to the claiming of political rights or recognition (e.g. language or sexual rights) by viewing these issues as matters of citizenship (e.g. Fairclough, Pardoe, & Szerszynski, 2006; Stroud, 2001; Milani, 2017b). While they provide persuasive accounts of how the lens of citizenship can shed light on sociolinguistic topics and offer premises (e.g. citizenship is more than just a status) that this thesis eventually employed, they are not directly concerned with the investigation of citizenship itself, more so, with new citizenship.

Informed by what has been done and is yet to be done in the field of language and citizenship in Singapore and elsewhere, I proposed metapragmatics, an approach that incorporates concepts from semiotics, language ideologies, and affect studies, as a framework for the understanding of the relationship between language and citizenship. This approach allows researchers to understand how various linguistic and multimodal resources in different discursive forms can be drawn together, yet still be understood as coherently (cf. Jaffe, 2016) related to each other, to construct citizenship in different discourses in Singapore society. This approach can help us unpack the meaning-making potential of various signs as they are resignified and reframed in new citizens' talk about citizenship.

The two literature review chapters demonstrated the value of an interdisciplinary approach to language and citizenship. Citizenship studies can benefit from sociolinguistics: the latter can enable the former to examine not just what people do with language but also what language does to people or how language influences how people make sense of or live their lives. Sociolinguistics can benefit from studying citizenship because the tension between the local and the global that citizenship highlights in many national contexts can be a site for investigating the political implications of discursive and metapragmatic negotiation of identities in the context of increasing mobility and transnationalism, therefore an important site for the sociolinguistics of globalization.

This led me to three research questions:

1. How is the notion of citizenship discursively constructed in Singapore?
2. How do new citizens negotiate their positions as new citizens of Singapore?
3. How does the new citizen perspective contribute to our understanding of how dominant discourses on citizenship are circulated and reproduced in Singapore?

To address these questions, I examined a dataset consisting of public media texts, interview narratives, and field observations collected during my one-year fieldwork, which I described in Chapter 4. I also provided my rationale for using various methods from discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and linguistic ethnography in this discussion. I claimed that the combination of these methods could enable me to properly account for the

discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore and appreciate its situatedness in my participants' lives and in the material conditions in Singapore. The research questions were answered in the three succeeding analytical chapters.

Chapter 5 presented a corpus-based analysis of the representations of citizenship and citizenship categories in public media texts. Themes about how citizenship and citizenship categories were drawn from the linguistic patterns (e.g. words associated with keywords, transitivity) in the texts. The themes showed that while citizenship and citizenship categories were commonly talked about in relation to the legal and political aspects of the status of citizenship—reflecting the view of citizenship as a bundle of rights and obligations—they were also talked about, albeit less frequently, in relation to everyday social practices and emotive concerns. There were different extents of this: the themes identified from the analysis of individual keywords showed variations (e.g. “Singapore citizenship” was more about legal rights and obligations than “new citizenship”). Despite these variations, the representations of citizenship and citizenship categories could be seen as clustered together and coherently understood as about citizenship, which implies that these representations showed the field of indexicality (Jaffe, 2016) of the metasign of citizenship. This contributes to our understanding of citizenship because it sensitizes us to how citizenship and citizenship categories were mostly talked about in Singapore. However, because the analysis in this chapter focused on themes that can be inferred from linguistic patterns of keywords from a wide collection of texts—which were from mainstream media that largely reflects the state's view of citizenship—the

representations of citizenship in the data did not reflect the uptake of new citizens themselves and how such uptake is grounded in new citizens' lived experiences. This is why I turn to how my participants talked about citizenship in their interview narratives in Chapters 6 and 7. These interview narratives, which contain accounts of lived experiences and emotions about moments when citizenship became a relevant issue in their everyday lives, complemented the analysis in Chapter 5 by examining the active role that new citizens played in discursively constructing the notion of citizenship.

In Chapter 6, I investigated two topics which recurrently emerged in the interview data: family relations and passports. These served as signs that index both rootedness and mobility, which my participants used to present themselves as new citizens who negotiate the global and the local—a dichotomy commonly associated in discourses about citizenship in Singapore (cf. Ong & Yeoh, 2012; Tan & Yeoh, 2006; Montsion, 2012). This indexicality was drawn out of my participants' accounts of lived experience and emotions: my participants identify an organic link between citizenship and the signs of family and passport, hence expanding the semiotic range of the metasign of citizenship. I argued that my participants were able to reframe the dominant discourses on the relationship of the global/local to citizenship in their interview narratives based on how they made sense of their emotions and experiences as new citizens of Singapore. This contributes to our understanding of the discursive construction of Singapore by showing how the indexicalities of signs that can index citizenship can be negotiated by people based on how they make sense of their own positions and the discourses that surround them in Singapore society.

Chapter 7 continued the analysis of the data coming from my participants. In this section, I discussed how my participants positioned themselves during the interviews as good new citizens who negotiated difference (cf. Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). These were drawn from the participants' metapragmatic comments about English and Singlish and narratives about how they emphasized or de-emphasized their differences with local-born Singaporeans as they lived their lives as new citizens. Similar to Chapter 6, this chapter shows that my participants reconfigured dominant discourses around them—in this case, discourses about multilingualism and multiculturalism that are associated with citizenship—in their interview narratives based on how they make sense of their backgrounds and positions as new citizens. By doing so, they were able to claim status as good new citizens because they can be “Singaporean in their own way.” Because these accounts are reconfigurations and not necessarily contradictions of the fields of indexicalities of dominant citizenship discourses in Singapore, my participants' accounts are still typified as within the range of the metasign of citizenship, thereby establishing them as legitimate resources used in the discursive construction of citizenship in Singapore.

## **8.2. Implications of Findings**

Throughout this study, I have consistently argued that citizenship is more than just a political status: it is a notion that can be contested, performed, and negotiated by various members of Singapore society (cf. Isin and Nielsen, 2008). While traditional legal and political definitions of citizenship remain strong given that nation-states continue to uphold citizenship regimes, analysts

should acknowledge that citizenship can also be a product of various negotiations by members of society. This view, as supported by the findings of this thesis, has various implications, which I discuss below.

### 8.2.1. New Citizenship as a Site of Sociolinguistic Inquiry

The findings of this study highlight the value of citizenship as a site of sociolinguistic inquiry, especially the sociolinguistics of globalization. With the history of sociolinguistics as a field that “...was founded on the ideas of diversity and diversification” (Coupland, 2016, p. 440), sociolinguistics has continuously explored different sites of research where language plays a role in the propagation or contestation of difference, struggle, and inequality. In the context of globalization, sociolinguistics continues to attempt to account for this in relation to the changing spatiotemporal landscapes of sociolinguistic realities—perhaps best exemplified by the “trans-super-poly-metro movement” (Pennycook, 2016). This implies an onus to understand mobility; mobile people carry mobile resources with them as they respond to mobile forms of community (Blommaert, 2010; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010). In this thesis, I demonstrate how the case of new citizens in Singapore serves as an example of the intersection of sociolinguistics and mobility. While citizenship is usually seen as a marker of permanence into a particular locale, this thesis shows that it is still laden with accounts of mobility, albeit in subtler forms. Moreover, this thesis shows that while new citizenship can be seen as a transitory state between being a migrant and being a citizen, in some cases, it can also be viewed as a state in itself that has to be understood on its own terms. The thesis shows how new citizens employed various signs to index

their status as new citizens, such as explicit metapragmatic statements, assessments of the impact of citizenship on their lived experiences, and multimodal resources.

This thesis contributes to the literature on the impact of citizenship regimes on people, such as the literature on language testing (e.g. Extra, Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009; Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero, & Stevenson, 2009) and the research on RASIM or citizenship applicants (e.g. Blommaert, 2001; Jacquemet, 2009; Kirkwood, McKinlay, & McVittie, 2013), by providing another category of people who must deal with citizenship regimes as they live their lives: the new citizens. While the citizenship application process in Singapore does not involve language tests (i.e. departure from the literature on language testing), this thesis relates to these texts by showing how similar struggles manifest in my participants' accounts of their lived experiences and emotions as new citizens of Singapore. This thesis continues the discussion put forth by these studies by showing that the regimented aspects of citizenship regimes can also manifest themselves in contexts which are not directly imposed by citizenship regimes, such as in accounts of everyday life generated from the interview narratives.

This thesis also contributes to the literature on representations of citizenship in public discourses (e.g. Van Dijk, 1984; Wodak, 2011; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008). This thesis builds upon the idea that was convincingly argued by studies in this field: linguistic patterns in public media texts can evoke various evaluations or portrayals of groups of people both overtly (e.g. explicit claims that some groups are “good” or “bad”) or covertly (e.g. subtle themes that can be inferred from transitivity structures). While



much work has been done on other citizenship categories (e.g. KhosraviNik, Krzyzanowski, & Wodak, 2012; Blinder & Allen, 2016; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2009), there is a lack of studies on how new citizens are represented. This thesis aimed to address this by looking at how new citizens are represented in public media texts in Singapore. Moreover, this thesis argues that it is necessary to complement representation studies with accounts of individuals: people's accounts of their own citizenship journey provide the necessary contextualization, or even triangulation, of what the representations are about.

Finally, this thesis contributes to the relatively new sociolinguistic literature that explore sociolinguistic issues such as language rights (e.g. Stroud, 2001), sexual rights (e.g. Milani, 2017b), or political rights (e.g. Fairclough, Pardoe, and Szerszynski, 2006) through the lens of citizenship (cf. Isin and Nielsen, 2008). While this thesis has a focal difference with these studies because this thesis is about citizenship per se, it still relates to these studies by providing a different way of how people make claims about their roles in society. This thesis shows that the claims made by my participants can be described as subtler or more covert: how they make claims about their positions as new citizens during the interview. These narratives may not be oriented towards particular material gains (e.g. achieving political goals in a meeting, see Fairclough, Pardoe, & Szerszynski, 2006): rather, the interview narratives may just be about articulations of how they get by in their accounts of their everyday encounters with citizenship. I believe that these claims can continue this academic conversation about the interface of language, claims, and citizenship.

### 8.2.2. Sociolinguistics as an Approach to Citizenship Studies

This thesis demonstrates the effectiveness of sociolinguistics—on the levels of theory, method, and interpretation—in understanding citizenship. While sociolinguists have long advocated for a view that stresses the dynamic and multifaceted nature of language (e.g. Blommaert, 2010; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Canagarajah, 2013; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010), it regrettably has not been picked up by many research on citizenship studies from other fields of the social sciences. I illustrated the need to examine language not just as a fixed social variable (e.g. Koopmans, Statham, Giugni, & Passy, 2005; Castles, 1995; Taylor, 1994) but as a propositional, ideational, and representational domain and resource of struggle and its potential contestations. Chapters 5 through 7 demonstrated this point: linguistic structures and thematic associations in public media texts help us understand how citizenship is constructed and understood discursively (Chapter 5); narratives that exemplify the interweaving of citizenship, experience, and emotions enable us to recognize how new citizens discursively construct citizenship as they take their positions as new citizens who negotiate the global and the local during the interview (Chapter 6); metapragmatic comments about Singlish and English made by new citizens complicate our understanding of the role of language in living new citizenship (Chapter 7); and multimodal performances reveal how citizenship can be called into being in everyday life (Chapter 7). Because language encapsulates ideological citizenship issues in the guise of the seemingly banal, such as in accounts of lived experiences and emotions, citizenship studies would be enriched by being more sensitive to the intricacies of language.

Moreover, this thesis contributes to citizenship studies by proposing a metapragmatic approach to citizenship. This approach enables researchers to not make presumptions about how citizenship can be signified or referred to; rather, it encourages researchers to identify and follow signs as they emerge in the sociolinguistic activity. Based on general linguistic and thematic patterns in public media texts, Chapter 5 identified how certain linguistic patterns emerged as signs that can refer to citizenship through their clustering together into the field of indexicality of citizenship. The same treatment was given to the interview and observational data: I demonstrated how signs (e.g. family and passports in Chapter 6, metapragmatic comments and multimodal resources in Chapter 7) that refer to citizenship can emerge and be typified as part of the metasign of citizenship. While it could be argued that signs such as passports (in Chapter 6) are *de facto* and automatically related to citizenship, a metapragmatic approach could help unpack how this connection is called into being by people: after all, people create indexicalities through their experiences with sociolinguistic realities (cf. Johnstone & Kiesling, 2008). This approach makes sense of the emergence of signs in people's narratives by unpacking what it means to them and what they do with it as a starting point. If we follow the view that citizenship is more of a dynamic process than a fixed political category, then it makes sense to understand that process not just in terms of what people do with signs that mark citizenship (a focus of research on diversity management, especially everyday multiculturalism), but also in terms of how they draw semiotic links between the said markers, their own lived experiences and emotions, and the notion of citizenship. In other

words, it is not just about the meaning of what people say or do; it is also about the meaning-making process behind such articulations or actions.

I also argued that citizenship can be viewed as a metasign: while people may have different definitions of citizenship, people somehow understand them as coherently about citizenship. This is because indexicalities can be negotiated by people. Hence, varying perspectives are still framed (cf. Gal, 2016) as about citizenship by establishing that they are within the field of indexicality (cf. Jaffe, 2016) of citizenship. This perspective is valuable because it allows us to understand how signs relate to each other, how they can be reconfigured by people, and how this provides opportunities for people to strategically position themselves vis-à-vis the manifestations of citizenship regimes around them. This is what I demonstrated in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. In Chapter 5, I showed how public media representations of various categories of Singapore citizenship (e.g. “Singapore citizenship” versus “new citizenship”) clustered together and formed a field of indexicality of citizenship within the texts. In Chapters 6 and 7, I showed how people’s self-presentation during the interview revealed how they reinforce or contest dominant discourses in Singapore in their own narratives, and how they oriented to the notion of citizenship. This is not to claim that the literature on citizenship studies have ignored people’s actions and beliefs: for instance, everyday multiculturalists have made a convincing case about the importance of looking at people’s everyday activities as a frame for understanding the framework of multiculturalism (e.g. Wise & Velayutham, 2009; Wise, 2009; Watson, 2009). Rather, I claim that the metapragmatic approach can potentially provide an alternative way of looking at how concrete actions can be interpreted as

actually about citizenship. This approach can potentially help us unpack how people make sense of their positionality and the discourses around them and how they semiotically relate them to the notion of citizenship.

### 8.2.3. Singapore and the Reconfiguration of Approaches to Citizenship

Finally, this thesis shows that the particular issues about citizenship that the Singapore context highlights are relevant to the understanding of citizenship in other contexts. As I discussed above, many of the landmark texts on diversity management and citizenship studies are based on Western contexts which do not share the material conditions of Singapore. One example of this is superdiversity (Vertovec, 2006), an approach from sociology that has made a significant impact on sociolinguistics (Arnaut, et al., 2015; Blommaert, 2010; 2013; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; among many others). While the current case of Singapore can still be seen in the purview of migration, it will be perhaps unconvincing to argue that this is significantly new or intensified. As I discussed in Chapter 2, migration and diversity have been central to the nation-building of Singapore. Moreover, the government's strategy of maintaining the CMIO demographic by applying it to PR and citizenship applicants challenges the view that the admittedly new context of globalization presents something significantly new to argue that this is superdiversity. My study shows that instead of trying to focus the argumentation on identifying new and intensified forms of diversity, it would be productive, in some contexts like Singapore, to focus on what people do to respond to diversity that has always been there. This does not mean to say that things in Singapore have remained the same. This study shows that it is not the

movement of people per se that makes the Singapore case interesting: it is what the government or its population do with it. For instance, in Chapter 7, I talked about how my participants deal with diversity through the negotiation of difference, which is based on local-born vs. new citizen differences—which is not necessarily a new or super form of diversity given the history of Singapore and migration. The negotiations of the global/local and sameness/difference, which respond to established government principles of pragmatism, meritocracy, and multiracialism and multilingualism, shed new light on the understanding of what new citizenship means in Singapore.

Secondly, Singapore is a small multilingual and multiracial city-state that aspires to be a global city (cf. Ho, 2006; Ong & Yeoh, 2012; Yeoh, 2013) as it strengthens its “Singapore core” (National Population and Talent Division, 2013). These characteristics are different from many contexts in the West. For instance, while people in Germany may have a notion of what it means to be German (e.g. Piller, 2002), in Singapore, the notion of Singaporeanness is still unfixed and is still being negotiated by Singapore society. As I explained in Chapters 6 and 7, my participants’ articulations of citizenship and accounts of how they imagine their status as new citizens cannot be simply explained using common diversity management approaches, such as segregationism, assimilationism, or multiculturalism. My participants’ accounts vacillated between them because of how they make sense of their lived experiences and how they orient to Singapore’s material conditions. The preponderance of narratives about the negotiation of the global/local (Chapter 6) in my participants’ articulations reflect the dynamics of Singapore society. For instance, in Chapter 7, I showed how the statal narrative of

multiculturalism serves as a basis for more complex identity work. This is different from accounts of multiculturalism (e.g. Watson, 2009; Wise, 2009; Wise and Velayutham, 2014) that focus on people's everyday instantiations of difference as part of their way of showing their value to the host society. In the case of my participants, their identity work is undergirded by "multiculturalism" that is explicitly made known to them, and they reconfigure that on their everyday accounts, which results in accounts of trying but not necessarily approximating Singaporean values completely and celebrating their personal differences. To my participants, new citizenship does not translate to being insufficient. In other words, there is no need to pass for a local-born Singaporean because who they are and what they have are enough to be considered good new citizens of Singapore. This is not to say that these processes only happen in Singapore: one can argue that this might be the case in other countries, such as the United States (cf. Levitt, 2014). However, this thesis explores specific aspects of the material conditions in Singapore that undergird this process. Even though this may be because it is a reflection of the asymmetrical distribution of resources (e.g. Singlish proficiency) or the incapacity to dismantle common markers of citizenship (e.g. race), it works for them: it allows my participants to get by with their lives as new citizens of Singapore.

### **8.3. Limitations and Recommendations**

At this point, I must acknowledge that this thesis has several limitations. The first limitation concerns the Singapore Citizenship Journey—a topic that was talked about in all the interviews. This thesis approached the

Singapore Citizenship Journey based on its website, government statements about it, and my participants' accounts of what it was like. I was not permitted by various government offices (e.g. National Population and Talent Division, Community Centres) to observe the comprising events of the Singapore Citizenship Journey. Future research can explore these events better to have a better understanding of the citizenship application process.

Second, while the interview data allowed me to come up with an account of how people make sense of their position as new citizens and the citizenship discourses around them, there are aspects that may have not been captured by this data. For instance, the interview data seems restrictive in understanding the extent of the relationship between dominant discourses in Singapore and their impact on my participants' narratives. While I showed how my participants could reconfigure them in their self-presentations, I could not account for how much they have really been affected by these discourses in their everyday lives. For instance, does this lead to the point of subjectification (cf. Foucault, 1991)? Future studies can explore whether my participants have internalized dominant discourses about citizenship in Singapore by exploring more datasets and more ethnographic data, and perhaps, for a longer period of time.

The last limitation I wish to discuss is my own positionality. While I have personal experiences in Singapore which inspired me to conduct this study and are comparable to those of my participants', my positionality as a foreign resident of Singapore may have affected my analysis and interpretations in ways I was unaware of. It perhaps goes without saying that my own academic inclinations may have affected this study. Even my own



writing style, and consequently, potential forms of knowledge that go with it, were affected by my position as a PhD student. The picture I painted in this study was my own rendition of my participants' accounts, the public discourses in Singapore, and the connection between the two. I do not have first-hand experience with the citizenship application and the everyday struggles that come along with it—up to this point, I have not even considered changing my citizenship. Hence, this thesis provides one account from a particular perspective that offers one view from my own position. Researchers who have more direct experience with the citizenship application process may be able to provide additional insights into this topic, which could continue the conversation about the discursive construction of citizenship.

#### **8.4. Final Words**

While I believe that I have accomplished what I set out to do in this research, I am also aware that this thesis may raise more questions than provide definitive answers. I aimed to present an analysis of how citizenship is discursively constructed in Singapore—a representation on its own, which I hope would not turn out to be a misrepresentation. Throughout the research, I kept asking myself many questions. What is this research for? How do I get people to listen? How can I communicate this work to the public? I knew that I needed to write this thesis to get my doctoral degree, but I also know that it is about the lives of people who entrusted me with their narratives (see Cameron et al., 1993). While this sociolinguistic investigation was not designed to come up with strategic interventions, I hope that it is able to start a conversation

about them. I believe that every step in the right direction, no matter how small, is worth taking. I hope this thesis will be read as one.

I began this thesis by talking about my personal background and motivation. Through the course of the PhD, I noticed that my curiosities have changed. I read more literature. I learned more about my participants' lives. I moved to London for the second half of my PhD and I came back to Singapore with fresh eyes. As I delved into the narratives of my participants, I became more conscious of my own journey as a migrant scholar who does research about people who were migrants themselves before they became new citizens. When I returned to Singapore, my friends and colleagues made many observations about how much I have "changed." People commented on my speaking style. People made jokes that I have become a "snowflake"—a term used to describe people who easily get upset when controversial topics arise in conversation—when conversations are about language and migration. Some said that they had felt compelled to only make "safe-space comments"—which meant they had to tone down potentially controversial comments—in front of me. While these statements were usually made in jest by people who knew me very well, and while I disagreed with them, I knew they were coming from somewhere. My personal positioning has evolved alongside my academic positioning—examining people's citizenship journeys contributed to my understanding of my own and vice-versa. This research enabled me to learn more about my own positioning and my own journey not just as a scholar but as an immigrant as well. That journey, and the stories we can tell and the lessons we can learn from it, must continue.

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## **Appendix: Interview Guide**

- I. Personal Background
  - a. What is your first name?
  - b. What are your contact details?
  - c. How old are you?
  - d. What are the languages that you know?
  - e. What is your educational background?
  - f. What is your occupation in Singapore?
  - g. How many years have you been here in Singapore?
  - h. How many years have you been a Singaporean citizen?
  - i. What was your nationality before you got your Singaporean citizenship?
  - j. Are your family members now Singaporean too?
  
- II. Immigration History
  - a. Why did you move to Singapore?
  - b. Why did you change your citizenship?
  - c. What was the process of changing your citizenship like?
  - d. Do you remember details about the Singapore Citizenship Journey?
  - e. Before you received your Singapore citizenship, did you have any issues with integrating in Singapore?
  - f. Now that you are Singaporean, do you still have these issues?
  - g. Who are your closest friends here in Singapore (citizens, PRs, foreigners)?
  
- III. Perceptions of Integration
  - a. How do you define social integration?
  - b. What do you think are your responsibilities in the process of integration?
  - c. What do you think are the responsibilities of the Singaporean society (government, civil society, citizens) in the process of integration?
  - d. Do you think you have now successfully integrated in Singapore? What makes you think so?
  - e. What are your opinions on the immigration/integration problems here in Singapore?
  - f. What do you feel about the “new citizen vote” issue of the recent elections?
  - g. What do you feel about the lack of dual citizenship option in Singapore?
  - h. What do you feel about the government of Singapore?
  
- IV. Participation in Integration Events
  - a. Why do you join integration events? How often do you participate in integration events?

- b. How did you find out about integration events?
- c. Do you attend these events with your friends and family, or do you attend these events alone?
- d. What do you like about these integration events?
- e. What do you not like about these integration events?
- f. Do you have any ideas how to make these integration events better?

V. Language

- a. Can you tell me all the languages and dialects that you speak?
- b. Before you came to Singapore: On a scale of 1-10 (10: highest), how good are you at these languages/dialects in reading? Writing? Speaking? Listening?
- c. Now that you are Singaporean: On a scale of 1-10 (10: highest), how good are you at these languages/dialects in reading? Writing? Speaking? Listening?
- d. What do you think of the “Singaporean accent?”
- e. What do you think of Singlish?
- f. Can you speak with a Singaporean accent?
- g. Can you speak Singlish?
- h. Did you ever try to learn the Singaporean accent? Singlish? Why or why not?
- i. Did you face any communication-related problems here in Singapore (from the time you moved up to now)?
- j. Did you ever get negatively judged because of your language skills?
- k. Did you ever get positively judged because of your language skills?
- l. Do you “switch” between these languages/ dialects?
- m. If yes, what motivates you to do so? If no, why not?
- n. What do Singaporeans think of your language skills?

VI. Language and Integration

- a. How important is language to integration in Singapore?
- b. Do you think new citizens should try to sound like Singaporeans?
- c. Do you think new citizens should use their “original” accents in Singapore?